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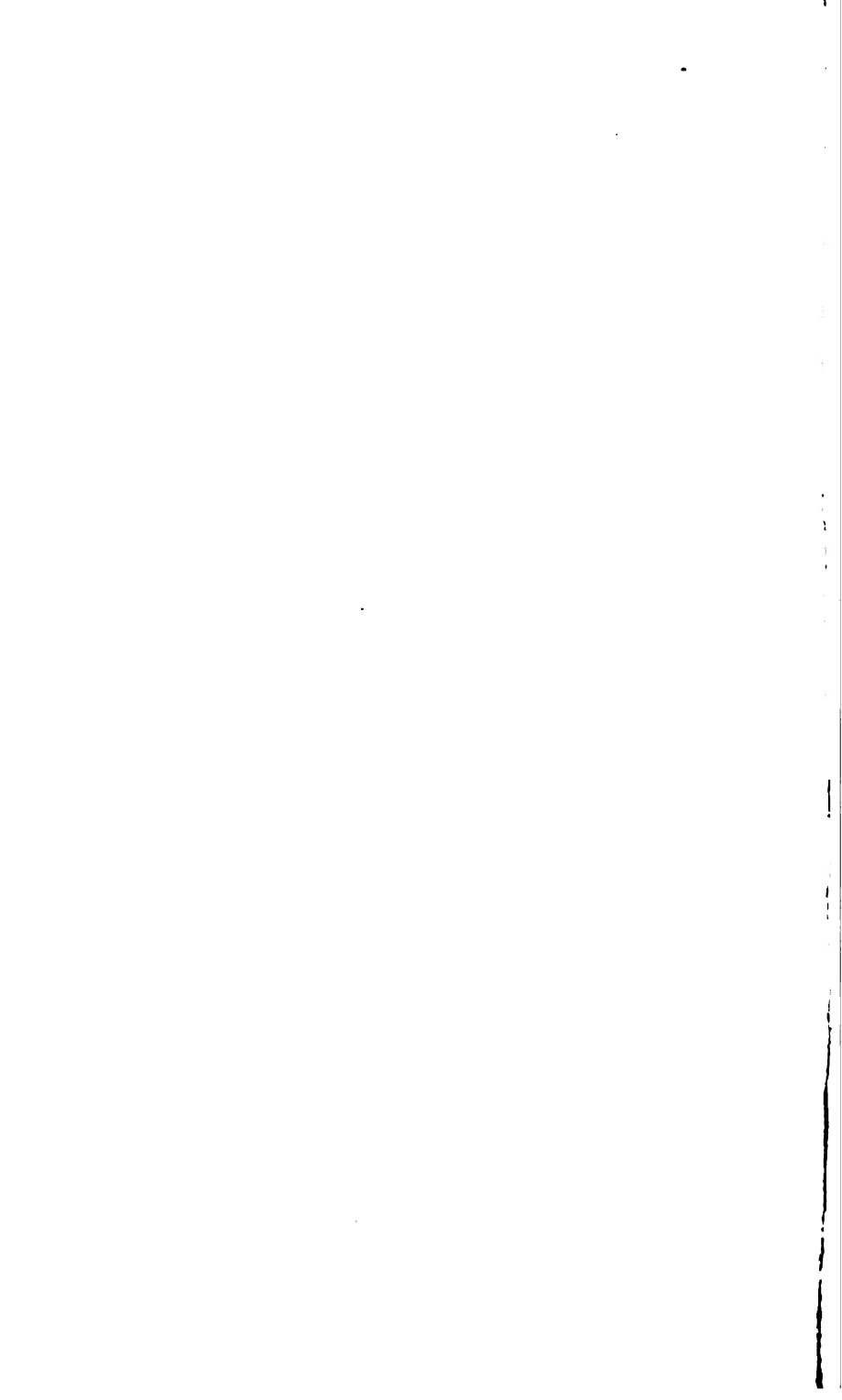
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THE
HISTORY
OF
ENGLAND,
FROM THE
EARLIEST PERIOD,
TO THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR 1812.

(2 vols) —
VOL. I.
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BY J. BIGLAND,

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PREFACE.



THE importance of historical knowledge is too obvious to need any illustration. History is the mirror of ages, reflecting a view of the human species under all its social modifications, and in all the variety of action. It furnishes the most ample and accurate knowledge of mankind, and is, therefore, a study essentially necessary to man: every individual is directly or indirectly concerned in the subjects which it brings forward to his inspection.

But if some knowledge of general history be indispensable in a person who makes any pretensions to literature, an acquaintance with that of his own country is requisite to every inhabitant of this happy realm. The slave of despotism, possessing no rights, can have little satisfaction in the retrospect of those events that have caused or confirmed his slavery; but no one, who boasts the name of a Briton, can be indifferent to the steps by which his country has risen to the commanding eminence on which it now stands, and by which he himself has ascended to so

exalted a place in the scale of human existence, enjoying the blessings of liberty under the protection of a constitution the most excellent that the world has yet seen.

From the consideration that so many histories of England have already been written, any addition to their number might, on the first view of the subject, be deemed unnecessary. But, on further examination and reflection, it will be found that scarcely any of those that have hitherto appeared are sufficiently adapted to the conveniency of the public. The common school books of this kind are too much epitomized to exhibit the connected chain of facts and events, of causes and consequences: some of them present only barren registers; and others are grossly erroneous in their statements. Those histories, which are on a more extended scale, are too prolix and expensive for general use. Few readers have the leisure and patience requisite for an attentive perusal of the voluminous compilations of Rapin, Hume, Smollet, &c. with their continuations by different authors; and little knowledge, relating to the gradual progress of British society, can be obtained from our common historical epitomes. The progress or retrogradation of arts, sciences, commerce, and civilization, can be traced only

through the series of transactions and events from which national prosperity or depression, and social refinement or barbarism, originate. But the acknowledged importance of historical information points out the necessity of rendering it accessible. Conciseness becomes daily more requisite, as great events are every year taking place, and an immensity of materials for history is constantly accumulating. The time, indeed, must soon come when compression will be an indispensable requisite in history ; otherwise the life of man will be found too short for the perusal of its ponderous volumes.

These obvious considerations suggest the utility of a history of our country that may be a medium between the two extremes of sterile conciseness and tiresome prolixity ; that may equally suit the library and the school ; and that, without being too expensive to the purchaser, or too tedious to the reader, may distinctly exhibit the series of events that marks our annals, and has raised the British nation from a horde of half naked savages to a nursery of statesmen, legislators, and warriors ; of merchants, artists, and literati.

Such is the design of this compendium. In the execution, party spirit, and religious pre-

judice, are wholly excluded. The ill authenticated, uninteresting, and ephemeral occurrences which, in every period of time, furnish the idle tattle of the day, and soon sink into merited oblivion, are either omitted or slightly touched; and the reader's attention is directed to subjects and events truly national, universally interesting, and worthy of remembrance. At the close of each reign, a general view of its effects, on the political system and social structure of the nation, is laid before the reader, and the character of the monarch is impartially delineated. In treating every affair, whether of a political or civil, military or religious nature, I have carefully endeavoured to proportion the detail to the importance of the subject; and thus to exhibit a concentrated and animated view of British history, adapted to the use of those who, without consuming much time, are desirous of acquiring a competent knowledge of the events that have either checked or promoted the interests of their country during its gradual advancement from primeval poverty and barbarity to the flourishing state in which it now stands—the great opposer of tyranny and support of the independence of Europe.

HISTORY OF ENGLAND.



THE history of every nation may be traced back to a period in which it is involved in the gloom of impenetrable obscurity. Some rays of light at length begin to appear, and the confused scene brightens by slow degrees. Great Britain was known at an early period to the Phœnicians, who traded hither for tin many centuries before the christian æra, and are supposed to have given to the island the name of *Britannia*, expressive of the article which then was the staple of its commerce.* Its first inhabitants undoubtedly came from the opposite coasts of France and Flanders, which were first peopled by two kindred tribes, the Southern Kelts and the Kimbri, or Kumri, called by some authors the Northern Kelts, and who, together with the Belgæ, a German

* This, however, is controverted by Camden, who imagines the name to be derived from the custom of painting or staining their bodies. See his long dissertations on the subject in his *Britannia*.

or Scythian tribe, are considered as the people whom our writers distinguish by the name of Britons.* But without expatiating in the boundless field of conjecture, it suffices to observe, that the first authentic information respecting this island is received from Julius Cæsar, who invaded Britain fifty-five years before the christian æra.† Cæsar informs us that the primitive inhabitants were driven into the interior, and that the maritime provinces in the south-eastern parts of the island were occupied by the Belgæ. The towns were only collections of mean huts, generally situated in the middle of thick woods, encompassed with trenches and ramparts of trees cut down and piled together for a defence against hostile attack.‡ The inhabitants appear to have had no other clothing

* Mr. Turner makes no doubt but the Kimbri, or the Kumri, were the ancient Cimmerians.—Hist. Ang. Sax. i. p. 5. For the migrations, &c. of the Cimmerians, or Kimmerians, *vide* Strabo lib. i. p. 12 and 38. Herodot. Clio lib. 15 and 16. Turner thinks it doubtful whether the Belgæ, in Gaul, were a German or a Keltic tribe; but he is of opinion that the Belgæ of Britain were Kelts.—Hist. Ang. Sax. i. p. 33 and 34. The Belgæ, both of Gaul and Britain, appear to have been the same people.

† Camden says in the fifty-fourth year before Christ.—See Britannia. But Dr. Halley makes it appear that Cæsar landed in Britain, 26th August, A. A. C. 55. A. U. 6. 696.—See his Miscell. Curios. 3. p. 422, &c.

‡ Cæsar Comm. lib. 5. cap. 17.

“Oppidum autem Britanni vocant quum

“Sylvas impeditas vallo atque fossa muniunt.”

than the skins of beasts, and they stained their bodies with a blue colour, which, with their dishevelled hair and long whiskers on the upper lip, gave them a terrible aspect in battle.* Some of their customs described by Cæsar indicate a state of absolute barbarism; but from an accurate examination of his commentaries, it will appear that the Britons were advanced considerably above the rank of savages. They had established systems of Government: the country was divided into a number of sovereignties; and, on the Roman invasion, Cassivellaunus was invested with the supreme authority.

Cæsar often speaks of their princes or chiefs holding consultations, and displaying a considerable degree of judgment and skill in planning their military operations. Their mode of fighting, though singular in its kind, displayed an extraordinary degree, not only of courage, but of sagacity; and the dexterity with which they managed their war chariots appears astonishing.† On every occasion

* Cæsar's Comm. lib. 5. cap. 10. Perhaps it was originally intended for this purpose, and also to defend them against the cold, by closing up the pores of the body.

† Cæsar gives a most animated description of the dexterity of the Britons in managing their war chariots, and by ascribing it to constant use and incessant exercise, intimates that the Britons were continually

they judiciously availed themselves of local circumstances, and when they found themselves unable to keep the field, they used to retire to the forests and other inaccessible places, from whence they often sallied out and surprised the enemy.*

Their religion was under the management of the Druids, a priesthood, which, according to Cæsar, was supposed to have originated in Britain, and from thence to have been transmitted into Gaul. As a proof of the reasonableness of the conjecture, Cæsar informs us that such of the Gallic youth as desired to be perfectly instructed in their sacred mysteries, repaired to this country in order to obtain a complete education. Their doctrines were never committed to writing, but comprised in verses, which were learned verbatim by frequent rehearsals, and carefully committed to memory; and in the Druidical seminaries twenty years was sometimes spent by the pupils in this tedious study. As they were

engaged in intestine wars. This he says was the case of the Gauls, and this must be the case of every semi-barbarous people divided into a number of petty sovereignties: how much soever particular customs may differ, the general aspects of society will be the same in all countries in the same degree of civilization.—Compare Cæsar's *Comm.* lib. 4. cap. 29. with lib. 4. cap. 14.

* Cæsar's *Comm.* lib. 5. cap. 15. This was the method taken by Cassivellaunus, when Cæsar had passed the Thames, and was marching towards his capital, supposed to occupy the site of Verulam, now St. Alban's, in Hertfordshire. *Camd. Brit.* 295.

not ignorant of letters,* it appears that their prohibition of committing to writing any thing relating to their religion or philosophy, proceeded from the desire of rendering their doctrines of difficult access, and of confining all their knowledge within the limits of their own fraternity.† For no sacerdotal body, not even that of ancient Egypt, ever possessed a more absolute control over the minds and bodies of men. The Druids directed all public affairs, and decided all private controversies. They carefully inculcated the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which they justly considered as the most powerful support of courage and fortitude.‡ If any one was deficient in reverence to their dictates or decrees, he was subjected to an interdict, numbered among the reprobate, and shunned

* Comm. lib. 6. cap. 13. Cæsar says that the Druids in all their affairs, both public and private, generally used the Greek language, a circumstance which appears incredible, if we could suppose such a man to mistake in a matter so easy to ascertain.

† Cæsar says that the Druids taught "many things concerning the stars and their motions, the magnitude of the earth, and the nature of things; but it is impossible to say how far their knowledge of astronomy or of natural philosophy extended.—For an account of the Druids, see also *Diod. Sic. lib. 5.*—*Strabo. lib. 4. p. 302, &c.*

‡ It appears that the Druids taught the transmigration of souls into other human bodies, as the words of Cæsar are "*In primis hoc volunt persuadere non ingerire animas sed ab aliis post mortem transire ad alios.*"—Comm. lib. 6. cap. 13.

by society.* Thus by having in their hands the formidable engine of excommunication, which, besides its temporal terrors, involved an exclusion from the joys of a future life, and the infliction of future punishments, they extended their authority as far as imagination could carry its fears.

It is probable that the private religion of the Druids, like that of other philosophical heathens was a mixture of Polytheism and Theism.† Cæsar, however, who was not initiated into their sacred mysteries, exhibits them entirely in the character of Polytheists, and if they believed in one supreme and self-existent Being, it is certain that they also acknowledged a number of inferior divinities, whom they worshipped with barbarous rites, and endeavoured to render propitious with human sacrifices. They had images of a prodigious magnitude constructed of wicker work, and these being filled with living men, and then set on fire, the unfortunate victims were miserably consumed in the flames.‡ Although our pictures of Druidism being delineated by

* *Comm. ibi supra.*

† At some of their sacred rites the women went naked, but stained a dark colour with some kind of vegetable juice.—Pliny, lib. 22. cap. 2.

‡ The Druids also consulted their gods on the subject of futurity, inspecting the quivering flesh of human victims. They were also great pretenders to magic.—Pliny lib. 30. cap. 4.

Roman pencils, may, in some of their features, have received too deep a colouring, yet we may safely conclude that no system of superstition was ever more terrible, none ever better calculated to inspire ignorance with awe, and extort implicit obedience from both princes and people.*

In regard to the state of society among the Britons, agriculture was not unknown to them, although in the interior parts of the island they sowed but little corn, and like the modern Tartars, lived chiefly on flesh and milk. The country was extremely populous, and the cattle very numerous.† Horses appear to have been plentiful; and the Britons by the dexterous mode in which they conducted their war chariots, shewed that they well understood their training and management. It does not appear that they possessed either gold or silver.‡ These metals

* It is asserted by some modern writers, that Druidism included the doctrines of a Millenium, and of the universal restoration. Mr. Evans, in a note, refers to a sketch of the system of Druidism, by Edward Williams, the Welch bard, a work which I have not seen, and consequently can form no opinion of its merit—Evans's Sketch of Denominations, p. 217 and 218. Article Millenarians.

* Caesar Comm. lib. 5. cap. 10.

† Caesar *ibid.*—Pliny seems to intimate that they had some small quantity of gold and silver for ornaments; but from their intercourse with the Romans, an alteration might have taken place since the time of Caesar,—Pliny, *ubi supra*.

indeed were at that time exceedingly scarce in all those parts of Europe that were remote from Rome, and had not been subdued by her arms. The Britons, in their traffic, used either brass or small iron rings for money.* In civilization they appear, at least in the maritime parts on the south and south-east of the island, to have been nearly on a level with the Gauls.

After many harassing marches and sanguinary conflicts, Cæsar obliged a few of the British princes to give hostages, and pay a small tribute to Rome. From that period till

A. D. 43. the reign of Claudius, the Britons remained unmolested; but for the sake of

peace and a free intercourse with Gaul they cultivated the friendship of the Romans by continuing to pay the stipulated tribute.†

The Emperor Claudius, or at least Aulus Plautius, his lieutenant, led a powerful army into Britain; and his reign is the epoch from whence this island must date its real subjec-

* Cæsar's *Comm.* lib. 5. cap. 10.—Camden, in his *Britannia* says, that the Britons had some gold and silver coins; but Bishop Gibson says that all those he had seen were neither good gold nor silver, but a kind of composition or mixture. Camden gives the representation of seventy-two British coins; but they seem to be those of the princes who were tributaries to the Romans, and consequently posterior to Cæsar's invasion.

† Tacit. *Ann.* lib. 2.

tion to the Roman dominion. In less than twenty years several emporia were established, and the marks of an active commerce began to appear,* Roman manners began to prevail, and the petty princes and chiefs of Britain vied with each other in adopting the customs of their polished masters. But the Druids, who beheld with regret the subversion of their ancient constitution, and the consequent extinction of their power and influence, assiduously laboured to excite the Britons to revolt. Suetonius Paulinus, Nero's lieutenant, therefore resolved to extirpate an order of priests, who seemed to have vowed perpetual enmity to the Roman name, and marched to attack the island of Mona,† their principal sanctuary and their last refuge. But the tyrannical conduct of the Romans themselves proved more prejudicial to their interests than the machinations of the Druids. Their insolent and indecent treatment of Boadicea, widow of the King of the Iceni, and her two daughters, occasioned a general revolt. This intrepid heroine placing herself at the head of an innumerable multitude of Britons, first directed her fury against the

* Stillingfleet Orig. Brit. p. 6.

† The modern Anglesey.

Roman colony of Verulam, the modern St. Alban's, which she took by assault, and put all to the sword.* London, and several other cities, experienced the same treatment. But the courage and skill of Paulinus, who returned with great celerity from Mona, and defeated her tumultuous army, saved the remainder of the Romans, whom her rapid and sanguinary successes threatened with total destruction.

The Roman dominion, however, was not fully established in Britain till the reign of Vespasian,† whose lieutenant, Julius Elgicola, reduced to subjection the greatest part of the island, and secured, by a judicious policy, what he had acquired by arms. He resumed the expedition against Mona, and accomplished the destruction or dispersion of the Druids. Having penetrated as far north as the frith of Murray, and defeated the celebrated Galgacus, King of the Caledonians, he divided the Roman territory into the four provinces of *Britannia prima*, comprising the southern part of England: *Flavia Cæsariensis* comprising the middle: *Maxima Cæsariensis* the northern parts, and *Vespasiana*, consisting of the conquests which he

* Tacit. Ann. lib. 14.—This revolt and massacre happened A. D. 61.

† Vespasian himself had formerly served in Britain.—Sueton. in Vesp. cap. 4.

had made in Caledonia. The country was now entirely romanised: the edifices, both public and private, were constructed in the Roman style of architecture: the Britons conformed to the Roman customs, studied the Latin language, and considered themselves as Romans.

In this, as well as in all the other conquered countries, the Romans made great improvements. Walls or ramparts, with deep trenches, were, at different periods thrown up for defence against the unsubdued tribes in the northern parts of the island; and roads were made in order to render the communication between the military stations safe and commodious. Several of the Emperors visited Britain. Adrian, during his residence in the island, constructed for its defence the famous wall or rampart which extended across the country from Newcastle to Carlisle. This, however, did not prove an effectual defence against the northern marauders, who, after the departure of Adrian, renewed their incursions into the Roman province. In order to provide for its better security the Emperor Septimus Severus came into Britain, and having repulsed the Caledonians, and repaired the wall of Adrian, he died at York. At that city, the chief of the Roman stations in

A. D. 211.

Britain, Constantius Chlorus, father of Constantine the Great, also long resided, and there he expired. His son, Constantine, received the imperial purple at York from the hands of the Roman soldiery, and carried with him to the continent the flower of the British youth.* The numerous benefits which the Britons derived from their subjection to the Romans, who carried the arts of civilization as far as their conquests extended, were counteracted by a serious evil: the country was continually drained of its warlike youth, to fight the battles of the empire in distant climes.† Amidst the commotions which so often convulsed the Roman state, several of the military commanders in Britain assumed the imperial purple; and numbers of the natives allured by honours, rewards, and promises, enlisted under their banners, and perished in supporting their cause. At the commencement of the reign of Theodosius the Great, Maximus, commander of the Roman forces in this island, assumed

* Constantine, in his war against Maxentius, led over the Alps into Italy, an army of Britons, Gauls, and Germans, amounting to 98,000 men.—See Brady, p. 33.

† According to the "*Notitia imperii*," no less than twelve British corps of infantry and cavalry were constantly dispersed in the distant provinces of the empire, while foreign soldiers were, according to the invariable maxims of Roman policy, stationed in Britain.

the imperial title and dignity, and carried over into Gaul a numerous army, composed chiefly of Britons. With this force he made himself master of Gaul and part of Germany; but afterwards advancing into Italy, he was defeated and slain, and scarcely any of his British troops ever returned to their own country.* The consequences of these military emigrations were afterwards severely felt. Soon after the commencement of the fifth century, the Roman empire, being divided between the two sons of Theodosius the Great, was rent with intestine divisions, and attacked on the whole length of its extensive frontier by the barbarous nations seated to the north of the Danube. In these circumstances the Romans were unable to send any succours to the distant province of Britain, which was exposed to the depredations of the Picts and Scots.† The Britons despairing of aid from Rome, proceeded to elect a new Emperor: two persons were successively vested

* Many of the British soldiers who had followed Maximus, are said to have settled in Armorica, the modern province of Bretagne, in France.—Rapin l. p. 25. This is contradicted by Du Bos.—Hist. Crit. 2. p. 470.

† The Picts were the remnant of the ancient Britons, who having retired into the countries beyond the Tyne, had ever maintained a predatory war against the Roman province. The Scots came from Ireland, and uniting with the Picts, at length became masters of all the northern parts of Britain. See Lloyd's Hist. Acc. p. 5, &c. &c.

with that dignity, and successively deposed and slain. A common soldier, named Constantine, was then raised to the imperial purple. The new emperor being a man of courage and conduct, repulsed the invaders;* but his ambition contributed to the further exhaustion of the military strength of the country. Not satisfied with the sovereignty of Britain, he formed the design of making himself master of the whole empire. In this view he collected all that were fit to bear arms, both Romans and Britons, and led a numerous army into Gaul, but was taken prisoner at Arles by the troops of the Emperor Honorius, and put to death as an usurper. Honorius, however, being unable to defend
A. D. 410. his continental empire, or even the imperial city of Rome, which was taken and sacked by Ataric, King of the Goths, voluntarily resigned the sovereignty of Britain. But in the reign of Valentinian III. the Britons, by their earnest solicitations, prevailed on Ætius, the Roman general in Gaul, to send Gallio of Ravenna with a legion to their assistance. Gallio repulsed the Picts and Scots; but being soon recalled to the defence of the empire, which was now invaded in every

* Zosim. lib. 6. Marcellin p. 38.

quarter, and ready to sink under the incessant attacks of the northern barbarians, the Roman commander informed the Britons that they had no further aid to expect from the Emperor ; and after assisting them in repairing and fortifying the wall of Severus, and giving them a variety of political and military instructions, he departed with his troops to the continent.*

A. D. 426,
or 427. Thus in the reign of Valentinian III. the Romans finally abandoned Britain, after having held the sovereignty of the island about four hundred and seventy-six years, reckoning from Cæsar's invasion.† But it must be observed that no colonies had been established before the reign of Claudius. The Romans had greatly improved and enriched the island ; the commerce of which was extended to every part of the empire. To their conquerors the Britons owed the introduction of the christian religion, as well

* Mr. Turner gives no credit to this account, which rests chiefly on the authority of Gildas and Bede. Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. 3. p. 275, and Du Bos. Hist. Crit. p. 211, fix on the year 409 for the defection of Britain. Compare also Bede lib. 1. cap. 2 and 11.

† This is Rapiu's account. Turner says that the Britains finding themselves unsupported by the Romans, deposed the imperial magistrates, and declared themselves independent. He ridicules the pretended letter to Ælius, the consul, though generally retailed by our writers. Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 77, &c. Du Bos. Hist. Crit. p. 221 ; and Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. 3. p. 275, place the defection of the Brit. A. D. 409.

as of letters and science, and of various mechanical arts, of which they were formerly ignorant. The Romans had also introduced a variety of vegetable productions, before unknown in the island.* They also founded twenty-eight cities on the site of which stand many of our principal modern towns. Under the Roman dominion Britain had assumed a new aspect, and emerged from barbarity to civilization.†

On the departure of the Romans, who had been, so long their rulers and protectors, the Britons found themselves totally unable to resist their barbarian enemies. The armies carried over to the continent by Clodius Albinus, Carausius, Constantine the Great, Magnentius, Maximus, and the last Constantine, had exhausted the military strength of the country; and constant levies had prevented the reparation of such losses.—Such also of the Britons as had embraced a sea-faring life, served on board the fleet, which being withdrawn as well as the army,

* Bradley's *Surv. Anc. Husband.* p. 104.

† Panciroles computes the number of Roman troops generally stationed in Britain at 19,000 infantry and 1,700 cavalry. Dr. Arbuthnot calculates the pay of the infantry at 6d. and that of the cavalry at 1s. 6d. per diem, of our money, making the annual expense of £219,912. 10s. 10d. exclusive of the surplus of officers' pay, arms, stores, and other contingencies. *Arbuth. Tab.* p. 179, &c.

the island was completely stripped of its force, both naval and military, when it was abandoned by the Romans. All the martial inhabitants had been carried out of the country, and those that remained were the old and infirm, the luxurious and profligate, many of whom were turbulent and seditious, incapable of resisting their enemies, and unwilling to obey the governors whom they themselves chose.* Being thus without order or discipline, involved in civil wars and continually harassed by the Picts and Scots, who attacked the frontier, demolished part of the wall of Severus, and spread devastation through the northern part of the country, they adopted the desperate expedient of calling in one barbarous nation to protect them against another. In this they followed the example of their old masters, the Romans, and experienced the same misfortunes.†

The nation whom the Britons employed as auxiliaries were the Saxons. The origin of this people is no otherwise known than

* On the deposition or departure of the Roman magistrates, Britain was divided into thirty independent republics : a scene of civil discord ensued, and terminated in the predominance of military tyrants. Gildas 8. 19.—St. Jerome denominates Britain "*provincia fertilis tyrannorum.*" Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. 3—p. 277.

† Montesq. *de la Grandeur et de la decadence des Romains*, chap. 18—p. 108 and 109.—Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. *ubi supra*.

that they were a Gothic or Scythian tribe. Turner seems to derive them from the Sacæ mentioned by Pliny.* Others, however, consider this as a far-fetched origin, resting upon an uncertain etymology, and unsupported by any historical account of their migrations from Armorica to the shores of the German ocean.† Without bewildering ourselves in conjectures, it suffices therefore to say, that Ptolemy, the first writer who makes any distinct mention of the Saxons, describes them as settled before the middle of the second century, in a narrow district on the north side of the Elbe, on the neck of the Cimbric Chersonesus, and in three small islands not far from the coast.‡ At that period their country was limited by the Elbe and the Eider: in process of time being strengthened by a league with the Frisians, the Jutes, the Angles, the Batavians, and other neighbouring tribes, a powerful confederacy was formed under one common denomination; and the Saxon territory was extended over South Jutland, now known by the duchy of Sleswick, and to the banks of the Rhine, as well as to a considerable dis-

* Pliny lib. 6. cap. 11 and 19.

† Tindal's notes on Rapin, l. p. 27.

‡ Ptolemy Geog. lib. 2. cap. 11. The three islands were those now called North Strand, Busen, and Heligoland.

tance into the interior of Germany.* A view of their manners is given by Cæsar and Tacitus in their accounts of the German nations.† Their general characteristic was the love of freedom and of arms.‡ Their kings or chiefs had, in time of peace, a very limited authority; but in war, they were vested with every power that was requisite to enforce obedience.|| Their public affairs were discussed in their national councils. All that we know of the Saxon religion is, that it was the grossest idolatry, and that their princes pretended to be the descendants of Wodin, a chieftain deified for his warlike exploits. The Saxons had long carried on a system of piratical depredation. In the time of Carausius, who assumed the imperial purple in Britain A. D. 288, they, as well as the Franks, greatly increased their strength by their alliance with that famous Roman usur-

* Among the nations composing this confederacy the Saxons, the Jutes, and the Angles were those that were chiefly concerned in the conquest of Britain. The Jutes and the Angles were seated in the duchy of Sleswick. The city of Sleswick was the capital of the Angles. Pontan. Geog. p. 655, &c. Rapin l. p. 26 and 27.

† Cæsar Comm. lib. 6. cap. 19, 20, 21, 22. Tacitus de moribus Germanorum.

‡ Cæsar Comm. lib. 6. cap. 19, &c. Tacit. de mor. Germanorum lib. cap. 14, 15.

|| Cæsar Comm. lib. 6. cap. 21. It must here be observed, that neither Cæsar nor Tacitus mentions the Saxons in particular; but there can be no doubt that their manners and customs were nearly similar to those of the other German nations.

per, who, in order to support his power by their maritime services, furnished them with ships and experienced officers, from whom they derived great improvement in the art of navigation.* Every coast that did not acknowledge the authority of Carausius, was exposed to their incursions; and during his reign of seven years, they perfected themselves in the practise of piratical warfare. From this time they made frequent descents on the island of Britain, during the fourth century; and in order to repel their incursions, the Romans had always a body of troops stationed on the coast, under a general, entitled "*Comes littoris Saxonici*," or commander of the Saxon shore.† The decline of the Roman power was favourable to their piratical enterprises; and while their neighbours, the Franks, were moving forward to the conquest of Belgium and Gaul, the Saxons were employed in ravaging the coasts of Britain, till at length they succeeded in making permanent establishments in the island, and subjugating or expelling its ancient inhabitants.

Two Saxon chiefs, Hengist and
A. D. 449. his brother, Horsa, arrived on the Kentish coast with three small ships, which,

* Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp.

† i. e. of the coasts exposed to the Saxons.

if their size be estimated by that of the Danish vessels in a subsequent age, could not carry more than three hundred men.* Being retained by the British King to assist him against the Picts and Scots, they departed, after having wintered in the Isle of Thanet; and having engaged a number of their countrymen to join in the enterprise, they returned, and assisted the Britons in defeating and driving out their enemies. But observing the weakness and disunion of the Britons, they soon formed the design of establishing themselves in a country which agriculture and civilization had rendered so greatly superior to their own. A pretext was soon formed for a quarrel with the Britons; whose disunion rendered them incapable of concerting just measures, and concentrating their force.†

Hostilities were commenced; and a sanguinary scene ensued. Horsa fell in the contest; but Hengist, after being successful in several battles, kept possession of

* The Danish ships used to carry 100 men each. Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 90, note 6.

† We hear of kings of Devonshire, Cornwall, Kent, and Glastonbury, several contemporary kings of Wales, kings of Deira and Bernicia, and others in the north and west of England, about the time of the Saxons. Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 85, &c.—Another author says, "*Tota insula diversis regibus divisa.*" The whole island was divided among different kings. Usher p. 662.

Kent, of which he had assumed the title of king at the commencement of the war.*

Other Saxon chiefs brought over into Britain their barbarian bands, and following the example of Hengist, met with similar success. The seven kingdoms which composed the heptarchy, were founded in the following order: 1st, Kent, as already mentioned by Hengist, A. D. 455; 2d, South Saxons, comprising Sussex and Surrey, by Ella, A. D. 491; 3d, West Saxons or Wessex, comprehending Berkshire, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, Somersetshire, and Devonshire, by Cerdic, A. D. 519; 4th, East Saxons, occupying only Essex, Middlesex, and part of Hertfordshire, by Erchenwind, A. D. 527; 5th, Northumberland, which included the counties of York, Lancaster, Westmoreland, Cumberland, Northumberland, and Durham, was founded by Ida, A. D. 547;† 6th, East

* The kingdom of Kent embraced christianity A. D. 598. Ethelred, the first christian king of the Saxons, being converted by Augustine, the monk, and other missionaries, sent from Rome for that purpose. Hume believes than Hengist carried his devastations to the remotest corners of the island: but Mr. Whitaker is of opinion that he never extended his territories beyond the county of Kent. Whitak. Hist. Manchest. 2. p. 28.

† Northumberland was sometimes divided into two distinct kingdoms, Bernicia and Deira; the former comprising that part which lies on the north of the Tyne; the latter all the district from the Tyne to the Humber. Deira always had York for its capital. For the Anglo Saxon Geography see Usher's Primord cap. 12. and Whitaker's Hist. of Manchest. 2. chap. 4.

Anglia, comprising Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridge, by Uffa, A. D. 575; and 7th, Mercia; the most extensive of all the kingdoms of the heptarchy, comprehending all the midland counties from the coast of Lincolnshire on the east, to Chester on the west, was established by Crida, A. D. 584.* At this period the heptarchy was completely formed; and the Britons giving up the long and arduous contest, made their final retreat into Cornwall and Wales.

From this historical sketch of the heptarchy, exhibiting in a succinct and regular series the different sovereignties and the epochs of their foundation, it appears that the war between the Britons and the Saxons had continued, almost without interruption, for the space of a hundred and twenty-nine years, before the latter could completely establish their dominion. This long and san-

* The order in which the different kingdoms of the heptarchy embraced christianity is as follows:—

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Kent, as already observed, | A. D. 598 |
| East Saxons about | A. D. 604 |
| Northumberland about | A. D. 628 |
| East Anglia about | A. D. 636 |
| Wessex about | A. D. 636 |
| Mercia about | A. D. 669 |
| South Saxons about | A. D. 686 |

As so great a revolution could not be the work of a moment, it is impossible, in some cases, to fix the eras with precision: they are here marked according to the most authentic historians. For an account of their conversion see Bede lib. 1, 2, 3, 4.

guinary period exhibits a dreadful series of wars and devastations, of which the obscure and confused accounts have baffled and perplexed our ablest historians.* But the aggregate of these calamitous scenes may be concentrated in one general and gloomy picture. The Saxons being a cruel, fierce, and rapacious people, unrestrained by any sense of humanity or principle of religion, spread desolation wherever they came, and converted the country into a desert. Gildas and Bede inform us, that all the cities and towns from the eastern to the western sea, with all the churches and other public edifices, were destroyed; that all who made any resistance were indiscriminately put to the sword; and that famine was the consequence of the general devastation.†

During this long and terrible contest, the Britons appear to have been often victorious; but their exploits are, in their own histories, exaggerated beyond the limits of credibility. The existence even of some of their heroes, as Ambrosius and Arthur, has, in the eyes of

* Turner confesses that he finds himself entirely at a loss for any authentic documents concerning the stories of Vortigern and Rowena, the daughter of Hengist, the slaughter of the British nobles, &c. so often repeated by historians. He seems to consider the whole history of Vortigern as fictitious. *Hist. Ang. Sax.* l. p. 87 and 92.

† Gildas cap. 24, and Bede lib. 3. cap. 15.

some critics, appeared problematical.* But if any credit can be given to the records of past ages, these were the two principal props of the falling Britons. According to their accounts, Ambrosius, who, by the general suffrage was elected monarch of the Britons A. D. 476, maintained a glorious and successful war against Hengist, Cerdic, and other Saxon chiefs, till he fell in battle A.D. 508. His successor, Arthur, surpassed him in the glory of his exploits and the extent of his fame.† After rendering his name terrible to the Saxons, he and his nephew, Mordred, the usurper of his throne, are said to have fallen in battle by

each other's hands. It is said that Mordred was slain on the spot, and that Arthur, being mortally wounded, was carried to the abbey of Glastonbury, where he expired, at the age of ninety years, of which he had spent seventy-six in the exercise of arms. The generality of the Britons, however, would not believe that he was dead. And what might appear incredible, there were many, that some ages afterwards, imagined that he was still travelling in foreign

* As Alexander esteemed Achilles happy in having a Homer to celebrate his exploits, so Arthur may be regarded as fortunate in having the British bards to sing his praise. See Plutarch vit. Alex.

† For the doubts which have been excited concerning the existence of Arthur, see Usher 522, and Turner l. p. 101.

parts, and expected his return.* Historians even assert that this extravagant notion was not eradicated till the reign of Henry II. six hundred years after his death, when his body is said to have been discovered in a perfect state of preservation, in the abbey of Glastonbury, the place of his interment.† The tale, however, is equally false and ridiculous; and the fact appears to be, that though his remains were found, nothing but dust and bones were visible.‡ What is said of his stature is equally romantic, namely, that the space between his eye-brows was a span, and the rest of his body in proportion. But every thing relating to Arthur was destined to be the theme of fable and exaggeration. As his exploits were extraordinary his stature must be gigantic; and his history has been so much blended with romance and disfigured by fiction, that some have even doubted of

* So late as the 12th century the people of Bretagne esteemed themselves so greatly interested in the fame of Arthur, that Alanus de insulis says, "If you will not believe me, go into Bretagne and mention in the streets and villages that Arthur is really dead like other men, you will not escape with impunity: you will be either hooted with the curses of your hearers, or stoned to death." Alan. de insul. p. 17. ap. Turner's Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 113. For the circumstances to which Arthur is indebted for his extraordinary fame, see Turner's elaborate disquisition. Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 106, &c. to 114.

† Rapin 1. p. 39.

‡ Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 108. Arthur's body was found A. D. 1189: his sword, which was named Caliburno, was presented, as a precious gift, by Richard I. to the King of Sicily.

his existence. The records of those times are indeed so obscure, so confused and contradictory, as to baffle investigation;* but from the length of time employed by the Saxons in establishing themselves in the island, it appears that if the Britons had avoided intestine quarrels, they might have preserved their country. But experience itself could not teach them this salutary lesson. Although they were never deficient in courage, they seemed incapable of political union. Whenever they obtained the least respite from foreign aggression, they relapsed into civil wars, which exhausted their strength and diverted their attention from the means of providing for their future security.

During these times of devastation and distress, many of the Britons withdrew to Armorica, since called Bretagne in France, where a colony of a kindred race were already settled.† A large body of them also retired

* "We are not able," says Mr. Turner, "to give the successive conquests in exact chronology: we cannot state in what year each British principality was destroyed, or each county subdued: we only know that from the sea coast where they landed, the invaders fought their way with pertinacity but with difficulty to the inland provinces." Turner's Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. ch. 4. p. 129.

† That the people of Armorica were of the same origin as those of Britain, is not to be doubted; but the common story of the British soldiers, who followed Maximus, having settled in that country, is by many called in question. The time of the arrival of a colony from this island, in Bretagne, is fixed A. D. 513. Du Bos. Hist. Crit. 2. p. 470.

into Cornwall and Devonshire, where they formed a small state, which had Exeter for its capital, and maintained a sort of precarious independence till they were finally reduced by Athelstan in the ninth century. But the last refuge of the Britons was that part of the island called Wales. In that mountainous region the relics of the British nation relapsed almost into a state of barbarism. The country being divided into a number of petty principalities, their intestine quarrels prevented them from pursuing any common interest, and private resentments predominated over every public consideration. Reiterated scenes of anarchy and confirmed habits of rapine rendered them inattentive to the arts of peace; and predatory war became their chief and almost their sole occupation. Their whole history presents little else than a constant succession of the same scenes of depredation and restless hostility, till Edward 1. as will be afterwards related, annexed Wales to the English dominions.

This slight sketch of the state of the ancient Britons in their last retreat having necessarily led to a chronological anticipation, it is time to return to the affairs of the Saxons. Their history, during the existence of the heptarchy, is scarcely less dark and confused than that

of the Britons. We find little else in their records than the accession and demise of their princes, their frequent hostilities, and their religious foundations, without any direct information relative to their progress in arts, in sciences, and commerce; and are left to the guidance of conjecture in regard to their general state of society. Whether the Saxons were acquainted with letters before their arrival in Britain appears problematical; but if they owed the introduction of letters as well as of christianity to Augustine the Monk, as some have supposed, it must be acknowledged that their progress in literature, as well as in religion, was exceedingly rapid.* It is evident, however, that no traces of learning, nor any marks of civilization, are discovered in their history previous to the introduction of the christian religion, which, within sixty years after its reception in Kent, was established in all the kingdoms of the heptarchy. From this epoch must be dated the first dawn of literature and science among the Anglo-Saxons, a circumstance which among a multitude of others of a similar nature to be found in the history of mankind, contributes to

* Ina, the famous king of the West Saxons, who began his reign A. D. 688, published a code of laws, which served as a basis to those of Alfred the Great in the ninth century.—Rich. Nichols. *Hist. Library*, p. 45.

shew how admirably the precepts of the gospel are calculated for the improvement and happiness of society. The scenes of carnage and desolation had no sooner ceased than the different kingdoms of the heptarchy began to assume something of a civilized aspect. Towns and fortresses were built on the Roman foundations; a number of churches and monasteries were erected; and some men of learning began to make their appearance.* In regard to the commerce of the Anglo-Saxons under the heptarchy, although we have no satisfactory documents to enable us to form any clear judgment of its nature or extent, yet the liberal benefactions of Ina and others of their princes to the churches and monasteries, afford grounds for a very probable conjecture, that trade keeping pace with other improvements had caused a considerable influx of wealth.†

* The cathedral of St. Paul's, at London, was founded about A. D. 610, by Ethelbert, king of Kent. See Bede lib. 2. cap. 3. Malmsh. 235. Stowe lib. 3. p. 141. Others ascribe its foundation to Sibert, king of the East Saxons, London being the capital of that kingdom. Sibert was also the founder of Westminster abbey, in a place called Thorney by the Saxons, and where formerly stood a famous temple sacred to Apollo. Camd. Brit. Middlesex. The cathedral of York was founded about A. D. 628, by Edwin, and finished by Oswald, kings of Northumberland. Bede lib. 2. cap. 16. The monastery of Glastonbury and the church were magnificently rebuilt by Ina, king of the West Saxons, about A. D. 700. Malmsh. p. 14. Croyland abbey, by Ethelbald, king of Mercia, A. D. 716. See Gough's Antiq. Croyland. The other Saxon buildings were numerous, but they were mean, and have been rebuilt in after times.

† For the donations and charters of Ina to the Abbey of Glastonbury, and the rich ornaments of the great church, see Malmsh. Antiq.

The political system of the heptarchy is as little known as the civil organization and social state of its different kingdoms. It appears, however, that one of the kings generally had a paramount power, and was considered as monarch of the whole heptarchy. But this prerogative was not confined to any particular kingdom or royal family, and whether the usual predominancy of one of the Anglo-Saxon kings was the result of actual conquest, or a dignity conceded in compliance with some ancient custom cannot be ascertained.* The heptarchy was soon changed into a hexarchy by the celebrated Ina, king of the West Saxons, who about A. D. 725, subdued the kingdom of Sussex, and annexed it to his own dominions. And when Egbert ascended the throne of Wessex, England was verging towards a triarchy. The petty kingdoms of Kent, Essex, and East Anglia, had already become the satellites of Mercia.

Glaston. 3. Gale 309, &c. and Dugdale's Monasticon l. p. 12, &c. About A. D. 727, Ina laid down his sceptre and retired to Rome, where he had founded a school, with liberal endowments, for the instruction of English ecclesiastics; and assuming the monastic habit, employed the remainder of his days in acts of devotion. To retire to Rome, as well as to travel thither, was greatly the fashion among all classes of the Anglo Saxons of this period. "*Plures ex gente Anglorum nobiles, ignobiles, laici, clerici, viri ac feminæ certatim consueverunt.*" In this respect many of the English nation, both noble and ignoble, laymen and ecclesiastics, men and women, emulated one another. Bede lib. 5. cap. 7.

* Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 133.

Wessex was enlarged by the incorporation of Sussex. And Northumbria occupied in producing and destroying a succession of usurpers and turbulent nobles, had ceased from troubling her neighbours.* Egbert having been compelled, by domestic dangers, to seek safety in expatriation, had, previous to his accession, resided at the court of Charlemagne, where he had learned the arts of government and war. Possessing so great a superiority, both in political and military skill, over the rest of the Anglo-Saxon princes, he easily reduced them under his dominion. But although he procured the pre-eminence for Wessex, he did not incorporate East Anglia, Mercia, or Northumbria, which were suffered to exist as vassal states, governed by their own sovereigns, till the Danish sword destroyed these kingdoms.† His prosperity, however, was soon interrupted by an event which proved the commencement of two hundred years of disasters. This was the invasion of the kingdom
A. D. 833. by the Danes, who landing on different parts of the coast, committed the

* Turner's Hist. Ang. Sax. i. chap 7.

† Turner discredits the common story of Egbert abolishing all provincial appellations, and commanding the whole kingdom to be called England.—Hist. Ang. Sax. i. chap. 7. He supposes that the country was so called long before the accession of Egbert.

most horrible ravages. Egbert hastily collecting some troops, marched against the invaders, but received a total defeat. The Danes, after plundering the country, retired to their ships. Two years afterwards they returned, and formed a confederacy with the Britons of Cornwall; but their united forces were completely defeated by Egbert, who having restored tranquillity to his kingdom, died in the following year. Ethelwolph, his son and
A. D. 838. successor, was of a religious rather than a martial disposition. This prince, however, being aided by the military talents of his son Ethelstan, was successful in repelling the Danish invasions. Being deprived by death of his eldest son Ethelstan, his two younger sons, Ethelbert and Ethelred I. successively ascended the throne. The reigns of both these princes were extremely calamitous. Ethelred is described as a prince equally religious and warlike. He is said to have fought in one year nine pitched battles with the Danes, the last of which cost him his life.* But although he had on every occasion displayed a dauntless courage, his efforts were unsuccessful. In his reign the Danes ravaged every part of England, de-

* Rapin 1. p. 90.

stroyed the famous monasteries of Croyland, Ely, and Peterborough,* and entirely subdued the tributary kingdoms of Northumberland and East Anglia.†

England was in the most deplorable state, when Alfred, the brother of Ethelred I. succeeded to its precarious throne. The Danes were already masters of a great part of the country, and were pushing their conquests with extreme rapidity. In the following year they subdued Mercia; and the lands of that country, as well as those of Northumberland, were parcelled out among the Danish officers.‡ Alfred, however, repulsed a numerous body of those foreigners, commanded by the celebrated Rollo, who having unsuccessfully attempted to obtain a settlement in England, sailed into France and took possession of Normandy.|| He also ex-

* Ingulph p. 15, 16, 17, &c.

† Edmund, the last king of the East Angles, being made prisoner by the Danes, was, by the command of their chief, tied to a tree, and shot to death with arrows, A. D. 870. His body was afterwards interred at Bury St. Edmund's, which derived from him its name, and miracles were believed to be wrought at his tomb.—Rapin l. p. 89.

‡ Rapin l. p. 91.

|| Rollo having conquered Neustria, which from the Normans or Northmen acquired the name of Normandy, was confirmed in the possession of that province by a treaty concluded with Charles, the simple king of France, whose daughter he married, and embraced the christian religion. See Hon. Ab. Chron. de l'Hist. de France, An. 912. William the Conqueror was the seventh duke of Normandy from Rollo. Rapin l. p. 164. See also P. Dan. Hist. de France, 219.

pelled the Danes from Exeter, and obliged them to retire into Mercia. But new fleets and armies arriving from the Baltic, the subjects of Alfred, either disgusted by something in his conduct, or terrified by the formidable appearance of the enemy, abandoned their sovereign, some of them retiring into Wales and others submitting to the Danes.* In consequence of this general defection, Alfred having dismissed his faithful domestics, concealed himself for some time in the Isle of Athelney, a place which nature had rendered almost inaccessible.† In the mean while the Earl of Devonshire, with a few valiant adherents, having retired to the castle of Kimwith, was closely besieged by the Danish army. At length he and his followers making a desperate sally, totally defeated the

* This is a very obscure part of history. Rapin supposes that the English were panic struck at the appearance of the Danish army. Hist. Eng. 1. p. 92. Hume also supposes that the English were quite exhausted before Alfred's flight: Turner, on the contrary, makes it appear that Alfred was not expelled from his dominions by the Danes, but that he was forsaken by his subjects for some misconduct in the beginning of his reign, though not specified by historians. Turner's Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. book 4. ch. 2.

† The Isle of Athelney, in Somersetshire, is situated a few miles N. E. from Taunton, and S. E. from Bridgewater, at the confluence of the rivers Parret and Thone. It consisted of only two or three acres of firm ground, covered with bushes, and surrounded with impassable morasses, being accessible only by an intricate path. Rapin 1. p. 92. Camd. Britann. Somerset. Camp. Polit. Surv. 1. p. 333. 2. 338. Aik. Delin. Somerset. p. 321. Here Alfred afterwards erected a fort. Malm. and Camd. Britann. ubi supra.

Danes, killed Hubba, their general, and took their famous standard called the Reafan or Raven, the loss of which greatly contributed to discourage them in their future attempts.*

The news of this defeat of the Danes and the death of their general, drew Alfred from his sequestered retreat. He is said by historians to have assumed the habit of a minstrel, and in this disguise to have visited the Danish camp, where he stayed several days, and observed their careless security and total inattention to the rules of military prudence.† Whether the story be true or false, it is certain that Alfred, soon after his departure from Athelney, surprised and totally defeated the Danes. He then concluded a peace with Guthram, their chief, who, with his people, embraced christianity, and was confirmed in his possession of East Anglia. A few years after this event, Alfred A. D. 887. laid siege to London, and recovered that city from the Danes. But the reader of English history must not expect a succinct or circumstantial narration of the Danish wars in this country. Their disembarkations were often unexpected: the ob-

* *Asser Vita Alfredi*, p. 10.

† This story, related by Ingulphus and Malmesbury, is not found in *Asserius*, the writer of the life of Alfred.

ject of some of their expeditions was to make a permanent settlement ; others were only for plunder. All their operations were irregular, and the occurrences of those turbulent times are confusedly related by historians.* It suffices, therefore, to observe, that, in the time of Ethelred I. and the first part of the reign of Alfred the Great, those terrible invaders ravaged every part of the kingdom, and scarcely a city, church, or monastery, escaped destruction or pillage. In fine the Danes retaliated on the Anglo Saxons the same calamities which their ancestors had formerly inflicted on the Britons. It must, however, be observed, that the people to whom popular language, which is seldom accurate, has given the name of Danes, and who, in France, were called Normans, and in Ireland Easterlings, were composed of all the nations who lived in the regions now known by the general appellation of Sweden and Norway, as well as of the inhabitants of Denmark.† Their expeditions were not national concerns, but private undertakings: each barbarian band fought only for its own emolument. From this circumstance we may readily account for their frequent violation of treaties, so much com-

* See Rapin's observation 1. p. 94.

† Turner's Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. book 3. chap. 1.

plained of by the English historians. As their armaments were generally unconnected, no treaty concluded with any of their chiefs could be binding to future adventurers. In the year 891, the Danes renewed their invasions. Numerous bodies of these depredators arriving from the continent, landed on various parts of the coast, and again reduced England to a deplorable state. Historians have not informed us of the means by which Alfred was freed from this new host of enemies.* Rapin supposes that the plague compelled them to retire. It is certain, that, after the war had continued three years, these new comers suddenly departed; and the Danes already settled in East Anglia, Mercia, and Northumbria, acknowledged Alfred as paramount sovereign of all England.

Having restored tranquillity to his kingdom, Alfred turned his attention to the regulations of the police, and the advancement of letters and commerce. In the year 893, he published a code of laws, which have been considered as the basis of the Anglo-Saxon and eventually of the English constitution.†

* Rapin l. p. 94. This expedition was conducted by the celebrated Hastings, who also committed dreadful ravages in France. Daniel Hist. de France 2. p. 99.

† Some of Alfred's laws shew the dreadful state of society which was the result of those predatory wars. It was customary among

The restoration of learning also demanded his care. The ravages of the Danes had converted the country into a scene of desolation and extinguished the study of letters. Almost every town in the kingdom was reduced to a heap of ruins: the monasteries, in those days, the chief and almost the only receptacles and seminaries of learning, were all pillaged and most of them destroyed, and the monks every where massacred or expelled. Amidst those scenes of universal danger and distress, when every one's attention was solely directed to the single object of self-preservation, and continually occupied with projects of resistance or escape, the improvement of the human mind was neglected, and almost every trace of literature, as well as of religion, was obliterated. Alfred himself, in his preface to Gregory's pastoral, complains that, between the Humber and the Thames, there could not be found a priest who understood the liturgy in his vernacular language, nor any person, from the Thames to the sea, that was capable of translating the easiest piece of

both the Danes and the Saxons to steal not only cattle, but also men and women, and sell them to each other. Alfred, therefore, enacted a law prohibiting the sale of cattle or slaves without a voucher. Another of his laws set a certain price on the life and on every limb of persons of each class and rank from the king to the slave. Tindal's Notes on Rapiu 1. p. 95. fol. ed.

Latin.* In order, therefore, to promote the restoration of learning among his subjects, he established seminaries in different places; and he is generally regarded as the founder of the famous university of Oxford, where, according to Rapin, he erected four colleges.† He invited from all countries the most learned professors, among whom was the celebrated Johannes Scotus, whose name is so eminent in the republic of letters.‡ These he encouraged by his liberality and animated by his example; for although a great part of his life had been spent amidst the bustle of camps and the tumults of war, no prince scarcely ever applied himself more assiduously to study. He was well skilled in grammar, rhetoric, history, philosophy, geometry, and architecture; he wrote several

* Spelman p. 141, &c.

† Rapin l. p. 95. Some, however, give to this celebrated university a more ancient origin; and Camden says, that even before the arrival of the Saxons in this island, Oxford was a seat of learning. Britann. with additions by Bish. Gibson, Camd. mentions only three colleges. If, however, Alfred was not its founder, he was certainly its restorer, and from his reign we may date the commencement of that celebrity which it has maintained through a long succession of ages. The origin of the famous university of Cambridge is equally unknown. Bede informs us that about A. D. 630, Sigebert, King of East Anglia, established a school which some suppose to have been at Cambridge, others at Thetford, in Norfolk. Campbell's Polit. Surv. 2. p. 330. See also Turner's remarks Hist. Ang. Sax. l. p. 323, &c.

‡ Tyrrel l. p. 306.

books which were considered as excellent specimens of composition; and he was esteemed the best Saxon poet of his time.* A prince so attentive to every species of improvement, could not overlook the importance of navigation and commerce. He caused ships to be built of a larger size than any of those formerly used by the English, and rendered his maritime force superior to that of the Danes. And for the encouragement of trade he caused vessels to be built at the public expence, and let out to merchants. It is also related, that Alfred sent Sighelm, Bishop of Sherborne, with gifts to the christians of St. Thomas, in India, and that this prelate, having successfully performed the voyage, brought back precious stones and other oriental commodities. The truth of this story, however, appears to some problematical.† But it is universally allowed

* Alfred acquired the rudiments of his education at Rome; and as he had received from nature an excellent capacity, he spared no pains to cultivate those advantages. He distributed his time into three portions: of the twenty-four hours in the day he always devoted eight to the duties of religion, eight to the administration of public affairs, and eight to the different purposes of study, sleep, refreshment, &c.

† This extraordinary journey is mentioned in Flor. Worcest. p. 320. Brompt. 812. Hunt. 350. Sax. Chron. p. 86. M. West. 333. Malmsh. p. 248. Rapin simply mentions the circumstance; and Tindal, his commentator, enters into no investigation of the subject. See Tindal's notes on Rapin l. p. 95. But the existence of a community of christians, in India, is a fact established by the best historical evidence. See Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. 4. p. 599. De Guignes Acad.

that, under his auspices and directions, several of the northern coasts of Europe were explored, and voyages were made to the Greenland seas. Amidst these endeavours for promoting the good of his people, Alfred was not less solicitous for preserving the public tranquillity: he established a well regulated militia, and took every measure that prudence could suggest for the security of his kingdom. This incomparable monarch A. D. 900 died in the fifty-second year of his or 901. age, and the twenty-ninth, or, according to some, in the thirtieth year of his reign, which was one of the most glorious recorded in history.* His character was adorned with every virtue and unblemished by any vice. Voltaire says, "I question whether there has ever been, on earth, a man more worthy of the regard of posterity than Alfred the Great, who rendered those services to his country, supposing that every thing related of him be true."† Another writer

dis Inscrip. 54. p. 323. Mr. Turner, in a judicious dissertation, evinces the probability of this journey of the Bishop of Sherborne. Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 314, &c.

* Rapin, with Tindal's notes, 1. p. 97.

† Je ne sçais s'il y aye jamais eu sur la terre un homme plus digne des respects de la posterité qu' Alfred le Grand qui rendit ces services à sa patrie, supposé que tout ce qu'on raconte de lui soit véritable." Voltaire Oeuv. Essai sur les mœurs 16. p. 473.

calls Alfred a pattern for kings in the time of extremity: a bright star in the history of mankind.*

When Edward, the son and successor of Alfred, ascended the throne, England was almost equally divided between the English and the Danes. The English were in possession of Wessex, comprising the ancient kingdom of Essex and all the country south of the Thames. Mercia was peopled with a mixture of English and Danes; but the former were superior in the southern and the latter in the northern parts. East Anglia and Northumbria were entirely in the possession of the Danes, who, however, acknowledged the paramount sway of the English sceptre; and during the latter part of the reign of Alfred, they had peaceably submitted to his dominion.

The first danger that threatened Edward arose from the pretensions of Ethelward, his cousin, who, attempting to hurl him from his throne, brought over the Danes to his own interest. A bloody war ensued, of which a circumstantial relation would be little interesting to the reader. The result was, that Ethelward being slain in battle, the Danes

* Herder Outlines Philos. Hist. of Man. p. 547.

were glad to conclude a peace, and acknowledge Edward for their sovereign. But this interval of tranquillity was only of short duration. The war was renewed: Edward was again successful; and having entirely conquered Mercia, constituted his brother-in-law, Ethelred, earl and viceroy of that province.* Ethelred dying soon after, the government of Mercia was committed to his widow, the Princess Elfleda, a woman of a masculine genius, who, as well as her husband, had greatly contributed to the successes of the king her brother. The English still gaining ground, the Danes of East Anglia submitted to Edward, and laid down their arms. But those of Northumberland being the most powerful, were the last that were reduced to subjection. That extensive territory was almost entirely inhabited by the Danes: they were governed by three kings: two brothers, Sithric and Nigel, reigned beyond the Tyne in Bernicia; and Reginald, who resided at York, ruled Deira or the country between the Tyne and the Humber. The Northumbrian Danes, however, at length were obliged to submit and acknowledge the paramount sovereignty of the English

* London, which had formerly been the capital of the kingdom of the East Saxons, was now the metropolis of Mercia. Rapin i. p. 98.

monarch.* Edward, having successfully ended the Danish war, turned his arms against the Britons of Wales, whom he obliged to pay an annual tribute.† He also erected a number of forts in order to overawe the Danes, and thus provided for the security of the kingdom. But he did not long enjoy the fruit of his victories. He departed A.D. 925. this life in the twenty-fifth year of a glorious reign, beloved by his friends and feared by his enemies.

Edward was succeeded by his natural son, Athelstan, whose eminent qualifications effaced the blemish that attended his birth; and supplied the defect in his title. He expelled the two sons of Sithric, the Dane, from the throne of Northumberland; but the inaccurate historians of those times have not informed us of the cause of the quarrel. Anlaff, one of the brothers, found means to engage the Irish, the Scots, and the Welch, in a confederacy with the Northumbrian Danes, and entering the Humber with a fleet of six hundred ships, made himself master of a considerable part of the country.‡ But Athel-

* Rapin, however, observes, that the sovereignty of Alfred and Edward over the English Danes, consisted in nothing more than the right of homage from their princes. Rap. Hist. Eng. i. p. 99.

† This was only the renewal of the former tribute.

‡ Historians are not agreed as to the number of Anlaff's ships. Turner states them at 615, and in a marginal note, No. 26, supposes

stan having, with extraordinary activity and diligence, collected a powerful force, marched against the confederate princes, over whom he obtained a signal and decisive victory.* This battle is said to have been attended with a greater carnage than any that had ever before been fought in this island. Constantine, King of Scotland, six other Irish or Welch kings, and twelve earls and general officers were among the slain. This victory was chiefly owing to the valour of Turketil, the king's cousin, who was afterwards Abbot of Croyland.† After this decisive blow Athelstan met with little resistance: he wrested Westmoreland and Cumberland from the Scots, and recovered Northumberland from the Danish king; he marched against the Cornish Britons, who had also joined the confederacy, and after reducing Exeter, their capital, compelled them to retire beyond the Tamar.‡ He also

that 30,000 men might be the probable amount of his army. Turner's Hist. Ang. Sax. i. p. 344.

* It is somewhat singular that the place where this famous battle was fought cannot be ascertained from any historical relation. In the Sax. Ann. it is called Brunanburh. Different writers give it different names, but with so little variation that they evidently mean the same place; but none of them indicate in what part of the kingdom it was situated. See Turner's Hist. Ang. Sax. i. p. 347. Note No. 35.

† Rapin i. p. 101.

‡ Rapin *ibid*, and Tindal's Notes.

chastised the Welch by raising their tribute to twenty pounds weight of gold, three hundred of silver, and twenty-five thousand head of cattle, besides expelling them from the country between the Severn and the Wye.* And a modern historian of distinguished eminence observes, that Athelstan was, in reality, the first monarch of all England.† His various and splendid successes carried his name into foreign countries, and several of the continental princes courted his alliance. But military affairs did not wholly occupy his thoughts; he was equally attentive to the interests of literature and commerce. He was the first Anglo Saxon king that caused the scriptures to be translated into that language;‡ and he enacted a law which conferred extraordinary honours and privileges on every merchant who made three voyages to the Mediterranean.¶ Athelstan died, A. D. 941. unmarried, in the forty-sixth year of his age, and the sixteenth of his reign, which

* Rapin 1. p. 101. Previous to this period the Severn was the boundary between England and Wales.

† Turner's Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. book 2. chap. 7. p. 183.

‡ Rapin observes, on this occasion, the rapid progress which learning had made in consequence of the wise regulations of Alfred the Great; at the first part of whose reign it would have been impossible to find, in England, a person capable of translating the scriptures. Hist. Eng. 1. p. 102.

¶ Anderson's Hist. Comm. 1. p. 99. Mr. Anderson from hence very justly infers, that such voyages were, at that time, extremely rare.

was one of the most glorious of all those of the Anglo Saxon monarchs.*

Edmund, his brother and successor, was not above eighteen years of age when he ascended the throne. Athelstan had left England in profound tranquillity; but that monarch was no sooner laid in his grave than the Danes began to prepare for revolt. Anlaff, the Danish king of Northumberland, who had been expelled by Athelstan, considered the youth of Edmund, who was not above eighteen years of age, as offering a favourable opportunity of recovering his throne. Having prevailed on Oläus, king of Norway, to espouse his cause, he once more landed in Northumberland, and appearing before York, the gates were opened to him by the citizens. The example of the metropolis was followed by most of the other towns, the garrisons of which were either expelled or massacred by the inhabitants, who were in general of the Danish race. After the conquest of Northumberland, Anlaff carried his arms into Mercia, where the Danes received him with every demonstration of joy. Edmund having collected

* The first instance of political intercourse or connection between England and France, is found in the reign of Athelstan, who supported Louis D'Outremer against his rebellious subjects. P. Daniel Hist. de France 3. p. 256.

his forces, a battle was fought; but neither party could boast of any advantage; and the nobles desirous of preventing a repetition of those calamities to which the country had been so often exposed, obliged the two kings to conclude a treaty of peace, by which Anlaff recovered the Northumbrian kingdom, with the addition of several counties, so that England was once more almost equally divided between the English and the Danes.

The peace, however, was only of short duration. A civil war broke out among the Northumbrian Danes. Those of the ancient kingdom of Deira revolted against the government of Anlaff; and having called in his nephew, Reginald, crowned him king at York. The English monarch seizing this favourable opportunity, marched into Northumberland, and having expelled both the Danish kings, reduced the country once more under his own dominion. Edmund then turned his arms against the King of Cumberland, who had assisted the Danes, and soon conquered that petty kingdom. He did not, however, retain that conquest, but gave it to the King of Scotland, to hold in vassalage, on condition of assisting him in all

his wars.* By this judicious cession of a distant province, on a precarious frontier, Edmund not only detached the Scottish monarch from the Danish alliance, but attached him to his own interests. But Edmund lost his life by a fatal accident when he was beginning to reap the fruit of his victories. A notorious delinquent, named Leolf, who had been banished for his crimes, having, at a solemn festival, presumed to appear in the royal presence, and sit down to dinner at one of the tables, the king, incensed at his insolence, instantly seized him. A struggle ensued, and Leolf stabbed the king with a dagger.† Edmund, on receiving the wound, instantly expired, in the A. D. 948. twenty-fifth year of his age and the eighth of his reign, in which he had equally displayed his political and martial abilities.

Edred, his brother, was placed on the throne by the unanimous suffrages of the

* Rapin thinks that the homage from the Scottish monarch for Cumberland, was one of the reasons which induced the English historians to regard the kings of Scotland as vassals to the crown of England. Hist. Eng. 1. p. 103.

† Historians vary in relating the circumstances of his death. This, indeed, ought not to excite our surprise; but it is somewhat singular that they differ as much in regard to the place where it happened; some writers affirming it to have been at Canterbury; others in Gloucestershire, &c. See Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 367 and 368. These disagreements shew the uncertainty of historical relations in those ages of ignorance and confusion.

nobles and clergy: His accession was the signal of revolt to the Danes, who recalled Anlaf to the throne of Northumberland. This prince, however, was no sooner restored, than a strong party being formed against him, he found himself obliged to fly into Ireland and leave his rival, Eric, in possession of his kingdom. The Northumbrian Danes being thus divided into two factions, the English monarch entered their kingdom, which he subdued and reduced to a province.* From this period the Northumbrians, overawed by English garrisons and governors, gave no further disturbance till the foreign Danes once more entered the country.

After the reduction of the Northumbrian kingdom, Edred reigned in peace over all England. This happy calm having put an end to his military labours, he turned his attention entirely to the affairs of religion, and gave himself wholly up to the direction of the famous Dunstan, Abbot of Glastonbury. He made him his treasurer, and committed to his care all his temporal as well as his spiritual concerns. Inspired with ambition and zeal for the honour and in-

* Ingulphus p. 30, 31, 32, &c. &c.

terests of his order, Dunstan made use of his influence over the king to advance the monastic above the secular clergy. The monks were introduced into the ecclesiastical benefices; and none durst oppose their elevation through the fear of offending the king and the favourite. But the death of

A. D. 953.

Edred, in the eleventh year of his reign, put a stop, for a season, to the triumphs of the monastic party.

Edred's two sons being very young, his nephew, Edwy, son of Edmund I. was called to the succession. This prince was unfortunate in ascending the throne at a juncture when the dissensions between the monks and the secular clergy divided the nation, as well as the church, into two parties. Edwy declared in favour of the latter, and banished Dunstan, the chief of the monkish faction. The disgraced party, however, had such influence over the people, as to raise a formidable insurrection in Mercia. Edgar, the king's brother, placed himself at the head of the malcontents, and being joined by the Danes of Northumberland and East Anglia, obliged Edwy to retire into Wessex and yield up the rest of the kingdom. This partition, however, did not long continue: the triumph of the monks and the dismemberment of his

dominions affected the health and spirits of Edwy to such a degree, that an excess of melancholy brought him to his grave, A. D. 959. in the fifth year of his reign.*

The premature death of Edwy left his brother, Edgar, in the undisputed possession of England. This prince was not above sixteen years old; but the maturity of his judgment and the extent of his genius, compensated his want of age and experience. His conduct was equally politic and successful, and his reign was uniformly peaceful and prosperous. He attached himself to the monks, who had been the authors of his first elevation, and whom he ever after found to be the firm support of his power. On being elected King of Mercia, he immediately recalled Dunstan from banishment, and promoted him successively to the bishopricks of Worcester and London, and afterwards to the archiepiscopal see of Canterbury. This cele-

* The monkish historians, who use every endeavour to blacken the character of this monarch, relate that, on the day of his coronation, he withdrew from the council to the chamber of a lady whom he kept as a mistress; and that Dunstan having the courage to drag him from her company and bring him back to the council-room, occasioned the hatred of Edwy to the monks. Some say, that this lady, whose name was Elgiva, was his wife, but that being within the limits of consanguinity, prohibited by the church, Odo, Archbishop of Canterbury, had the cruelty to cause her to be branded on the face with a hot iron, and afterwards hanged; but the whole story, like most other particulars of those times, is related with many contradictions, and seems at least to be greatly exaggerated.

brated monk was, during his whole reign, his chief favourite and counsellor; and his sage advice was probably the cause of Edgar's greatness and prosperity. The uninterrupted tranquillity of his reign must be ascribed to his formidable military and naval establishments, which greatly surpassed those of his predecessors. By maintaining a standing army in the northern provinces, he struck terror into the kings of Scotland and Wales, and overawed his Danish subjects. He also took the most effectual measures for preventing the invasions of the foreign Danes. He equipped a numerous fleet, which, being distributed in all the ports and cruising incessantly along the coasts, preserved the kingdom from any attack.* By these warlike arrangements Edgar maintained an uninterrupted peace; and without drawing his sword obliged the kings of Wales, Ireland, and the

* The maritime force of Edgar appears to be described with great exaggeration. Some historians have stated the number of his ships at 3600, vide Sim. Dunelm. p. 160, others at a still greater number. But besides the expence of equipping such a fleet, it is impossible that in an age when there was so little commerce, he should be able to man so many ships, if we allow only ten or twelve men to each ship. We must not indeed form our ideas of the ships of war in that age from those of modern times; but however small we may suppose them to have been, the number is incredible. William, of Thorne, computes them at only 300. See Tindal's notes on Rapin l. p. 106. And Hist. Comm. l. p. 95. It has been already observed that the Danish ships usually carried 100 men.

Isle of Man, to acknowledge him as their paramount sovereign. It is even affirmed, by some historians, that he was rowed down the Dee in a barge by eight vassal kings, when he visited the city of Chester.* The reign of Edgar is remarkable for being the period in which England was freed from wolves. These ferocious animals descending in great numbers from the mountains of Wales, used to make dreadful ravages in the adjacent parts of England. In order to effect their extirpation, Edgar commuted the annual tribute paid by the Welsh for three hundred wolves heads, and published throughout England a general pardon for all past offences, on condition that each delinquent should produce before an appointed time, a certain number of wolves tongues, in proportion to his crimes. This "act of grace" was no sooner published, than the wolves were so assiduously hunted and destroyed, that in the space of a few years the whole race was extirpated in every part of the kingdom. Edgar enacted many good laws, and built or repaired above forty-eight religious houses. He possessed many excellent qualifications;

* Supposed to be the tributary kings of Wales, Anglesey, Man, and Ireland. Tisdal's notes on Rabin l. p. 106.

but his virtues were tarnished by a mixture of vices. His attachment to the monks, which forms one of the distinguishing characteristics of his reign, displays not only his gratitude, but also his policy. They were the architects of his fortune, the supporters of his power, and the trumpeters of his fame. But no excuse can be found for his lewdness; and, although the monks gave him the title of Saint, posterity will scarcely recognize his claim to a place in the calendar. Leaving, therefore, his sanctity to their fabulous legends, we cannot but admire the policy of his government; and subsequent events sufficiently shew that the shortness of his life was an irreparable loss to the kingdom. Edgar died in the
A. D. 975. thirty-second year of his age; and an impartial view of things will oblige us to confess, that his reign of sixteen years was the most happy and prosperous period that occurs in the Anglo-Saxon history.

The death of Edgar was the signal for renewing the contest between two factions, which divided the church. The Duke of Mercia, sworn enemy of the monks, deprived them of all the benefices which they possessed in that province, and some other lords followed his example. On the other hand, the Duke of East Anglia, with several other great

men, adhered firmly to Dunstan and his party; and with an armed force protected the monasteries. But the influence of the two factions was chiefly exerted in deciding the regal succession. The deceased monarch had left two sons : Edward was the elder ; but the uncertainty of his mother's marriage with the king, rendered his legitimacy questionable : Ethelred, the younger, was Edgar's son by his queen, the beautiful Elfrida ; but as that princess did not seem inclined to be guided by the councils of the monks, Dunstan, who saw himself supported by the populace, resolved to place Edward on the throne. While the nobles were debating the question of the succession, the archbishop suddenly rising up, and taking Prince Edward by the hand, led him to the church, attended by the bishops and an immense crowd of people, and anointed him king without regarding the opposition of the contrary party. Thus the direction of the church was left in the hands of the monks, as in the preceding reign ; and the king, being only sixteen years of age, Dunstan had the sole administration of public affairs.

This sagacious politician, now exercising the regal authority in the name of the king, kept the monks in possession of the benefices

which they had acquired during the last reign, and supported by the popular opinion of his sanctity, bore down all opposition. Never, perhaps, did any man possess greater skill in managing the people and turning their superstitions to his own advantage.* His dexterity in working pretended miracles and producing oracular revelations, rivalled that of the most celebrated impostors of ancient Greece. The fame of his sanctity and of his miracles had, during the two last reigns, been established and spread abroad by the monks, and as eagerly re-echoed by the credulous people, who universally believed him to be endowed with supernatural powers and favoured with celestial communications. Thus, by the powerful engine of priestly craft, operating on popular credulity, did this extraordinary man maintain, during three successive reigns, the same ascendancy over the subjects that his sagacity and prudence had given him over the sovereigns.† It must, however, be acknowledged, that Dunstan

* Archbishop Dunstan was not only a man of profound policy, but of great scientific and literary attainments. He had applied himself assiduously to study the learning of the age. He was master of the mathematical sciences, as far as they were then known: he was a skilful mechanic, and excelled in music and painting. Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. I. p. 379.

† Mr. Turner has given a curious and elaborate history of the life and pretended miracles of Dunstan. Hist. Ang. Sax. I. b. I. chap. 5.

guided, with a steady hand, the helm of the state, and that England flourished in peace and prosperity under his administration.

In the mean while Elfrida, who saw, with indignation and impatience, her son deprived of the succession, meditated schemes of revenge, and her vindictive fury brought Edward to his tragical end. The king returning from hunting, and passing near Corf Castle, in Dorsetshire, where his mother-in-law and her son, Ethelred, resided, turned out of his way to pay her a visit. Elfrida desired him to alight, which he declined, as his design was not to stop, but only to pay his respects in passing, and requested a glass of wine to drink her health. But the young king no sooner lifted the glass to his mouth, than she stabbed him in the back with a dagger.* Edward finding himself wounded, clapped spurs to his horse; but fainting from loss of blood, he fell, and his foot hanging in the stirrup, he was dragged along till the catastrophe was completed. Thus fell
A. D. 979. this unfortunate young monarch in the nineteenth year of his age, and about the fourth of his reign, which, though short, had been uniformly peaceful and prosperous.

* Mr. Turner intimates that Elfrida employed an assassin to give the wound. Hist. Ang. Sax. l. p. 407.

The monks who had been all powerful under his auspices, placed him among the saints; and our historians have distinguished him by the name of Edward the Martyr.

Ethelred, who was only twelve years of age, being now the undoubted heir to the crown, Dunstan could find no pretence for setting him aside. He, therefore, ascended the throne without opposition. Elfrida, his mother, seeing her ambition thus gratified, endeavoured to atone for her crime by building two nunneries, into one of which she retired in order to calm the remorse of her conscience by a life of devotion. The accession of Ethelred was the death-blow to the power which the monks had so long enjoyed. This prince, who totally disregarded the clergy, gave himself up to a new set of counsellors, and Dunstan lost all his influence. But the disgrace of this celebrated minister, who had displayed so much skill and address in the direction of public affairs, was followed by a dreadful train of misfortunes, which soon after fell upon the kingdom.

During the space of sixty years, the foreign Danes seemed to have forgotten England, and those that were settled in the kingdom, had, in so long an interval, acquired the habits of peaceful and civilized life. But in

A. D. 981. the third year of Ethelred's reign, the Danish adventurers, from the shores of the Baltic, renewed their incursions. Their first attempt was made at Southampton, where a band of these rovers, arriving in seven ships, plundered the town and the adjacent country.* In the following year another band, landing at Portland, committed the same depredations. These first invaders meeting with little opposition and returning with abundance of spoils, the spirit of piratical adventure was revived with redoubled ardour throughout the wide regions of Scandinavia. Fleet after fleet arriving on the coasts, England was, during the space of ten years, exposed to the ravages of those depredators. It would be equally impossible and useless to trace the desultory operations of these predatory wars. The whole kingdom was a scene of massacres, pillage, and devastation. The hostile descents being made on every part of the coast, it was found impossible to guard so many points of attack, and nothing but a powerful fleet could have protected the kingdom against those barbarian enemies, who, on meeting with a superior force, immediately retired to

* Turner places this event in the year 980. Hist. Ang. Sax. i. p. 409.

their ships, and sailed to some other part of the country, where they recommenced their ravages.

Seven years had scarcely elapsed since the death of Edgar the Pacific, till the time that the Danes renewed their invasions. The shortness of this period, and the contrast of circumstances, will naturally excite the reader to ask what was become of the formidable marine by which that monarch is said to have overawed his neighbours, and struck terror into his enemies. It has been already observed, that the naval power of Edgar has undoubtedly been very much exaggerated; but although the greatest part of his almost innumerable fleet appears to have been only a chimæra, which never had any existence but in the prostituted pages of monkish chronicles, yet when reduced to a sober estimate, it must be allowed to have been sufficiently formidable to protect the kingdom against foreign aggression. The historian and the politician, in observing that after the accession of Ethelred the English were not less inferior to the Danes by sea than by land, must naturally impute this decay of the marine to some neglect in the administration. Archbishop Dunstan had fallen into disgrace, and soon after died, and it is probable that

the want of his counsels might be one great cause of the public misfortunes. The prosperity of the kingdom while he had the direction of public affairs, contrasted with the calamities, which followed the decline of his influence, seems to authorise this conjecture. The opinion of Dunstan's sanctity may be left to the testimony of the monks and the belief of the credulous; but impartial history must allow him the character of a consummate politician. And never was there a time that more imperiously required a man of abilities and vigour to stand at the helm of the state, than the period now under consideration.* But neither Ethelred nor his ministers possessed either talents or energy. In the cabinet and in the field all was dismay, disorder, and confusion.

The Danes, after having pillaged and devastated England during the space of ten years, desisted for a short time from their ravages. But after an intermission of two years, Justin and Guthmund, two Danish chiefs, landed their forces in Suffolk, defeated the Duke of East Anglia, and penetrating into the interior, committed the most horrible ravages.†

* Archbishop Dunstan, after being several years excluded from the councils, died in disgrace A. D. 988. Rapin 1. p. 118.

† In the year 991. Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 410.

Ethelred, notwithstanding his fatal experience of their former depredations, was still unprepared for resistance; and his nobles therefore adopted the absurd expedient of purchasing the retreat of the Danes with a large sum of money, which only served to bring new bands of adventurers; but might, if expended in preparing the means of defence, have preserved the kingdom from future invasions.

Allured by the wealth which their countrymen carried home, another band of Danes soon arrived in the Humber; and, after defeating the troops sent against them by Ethelred, they pillaged the country. At length, Swein, king of Denmark, and Olaus, king of Norway, resolving to share in the spoils which their subjects brought every year from England, equipped a fleet, and entering the Thames, landed their
 A. D. 994. troops near London.* Having made several ineffectual attempts on the metropolis, where they met with a greater resistance than they expected, they pillaged Kent, Hampshire, and Essex, and threatened to lay waste the whole kingdom. Ethelred, who was equally destitute both of courage

* Their fleet consisted of only 94 ships, their army of less than 10,000 men. *Id. Hist. Ang. Sax. l. p. 412.*

and conduct, had recourse to his former expedient. He bound himself by a treaty to pay 16,000*l.* and the kings of Denmark and Norway desisting from further hostilities, retired to Southampton.† The king of Norway soon after embraced the christian religion, and returning to his own country, never more troubled England.*

Swein, king of Denmark, departed at the same time; but he left a fleet at Southampton in order to enforce the fulfilment of the treaty. The English court, dilatory in all its measures, delaying to pay the money agreed on, the Danish admiral renewed the war. Sailing up the Severn, he desolated the adjacent counties with fire and sword. Putting again to sea, he arrived in the mouth of the Thames, and proceeding up the Medway to Rochester, he devastated Kent and treated the inhabitants with the utmost barbarity. Ethelred at length equipped a fleet; but it was rendered useless by the unskillfulness and the dissensions of the commanders. The English armies were no sooner levied than defeated; and the Danes, every where victorious, made themselves masters of the Isle of Wight, as also of

† Rapin I. p. 118.—Turner I. p. 412.

* Malmsh. p. 63.—Sax. Chron. 129.

Hampshire, Devonshire, and Dorsetshire, from whence they made incursions into all the neighbouring counties. In this extremity, Ethelred, with the advice of the wittena-gemotte, or general council of the nation, agreed to pay the Danes thirty thousand pounds.* This sum, which in those days was very considerable, was called Dane gold, or money for the Danes; and was A. D. 1002. the origin of that famous tax, which afterwards became so burdensome to the nation, even long after the Danes had left England.

The Danes being satisfied with this agreement, the greatest part of them returned to their own country. A considerable number, however, staid behind and lived among the English, to whom they behaved with the greatest insolence. At this period, according to our historians, a general massacre of the Danes took place by the orders of Ethelred, which were dispatched with the greatest secrecy to every part of the kingdom† But it

* S. Duncelm. p. 164. M. West. p. 386. The wittena-gemotte consisted of the prelates and nobles. Whether the commons had any representatives in this assembly is not ascertained. Rapa 1. p. 159. Turner says £24,000. Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 415.

† Rapa supposes, that Ethelred was encouraged to perpetrate this nefarious act by the expectation of being supported by the duke of Normandy, whose sister, Emma, he had recently married. Hist. Eng. 1. p. 119.

is scarcely possible that these sanguinary orders could be executed in Northumberland and East Anglia, which were almost entirely inhabited by Danes. When historians; therefore relate, that all the Danes in England were massacred in one day, it seems that we are to understand this expression as relating only to those who had come over during the late invasions, and who remaining behind after the retreat of their countrymen, were dispersed in different parts of the kingdom. It is certain that many thousands were butchered in the most inhuman manner; and among these was Gunilda, a sister of the king of Denmark. This lady was a christian, and married to a noble Dane who had long been settled in England.* At first she had been spared out of respect to her rank; but the barbarous Ethelred, after causing her children to be murdered before her eyes, ordered her to be put to death in his presence: she met, with the most heroic fortitude, a fate which was soon severely revenged.

This horrid tragedy, which was acted on Sunday the 13th of November, A. D. 1002, completed the guilt of Ethelred, and eventually brought all England under the Danish

* M. Westmister, p. 392.

dominion. Swein, king of Denmark, no sooner received intelligence of this catastrophe, and particularly of the inhuman murder of his sister, than he vowed that he never would rest till he had desolated England with fire and sword; and he did not delay to carry his threat into execution. Having equipped a formidable armament, he landed in Cornwall, and proceeding to Exeter, reduced that city to ashes and massacred all the inhabitants. The war was now carried on by the Danes, not for the sake of pillage, as formerly, but on the principle of vengeance and extermination. The whole kingdom, except the city of London, was subdued: the principal towns were reduced to heaps of ruins and ashes, and their inhabitants were put to the sword without mercy.* London was repeatedly attacked by the Danes; but the city being, at that time, defended by strong walls both towards the land and the river, was proof against all the attempts of their fleets and their armies. Ethelred shut himself up, for some time, in London; but dreading to fall in the hands of the Danish

* In the year 1006, no less than £90,000, or, according to some, £36,000, were paid by the English to the Danes as the purchase of a short armistice; and in 1010, the Danish victories procured them the cession of 16 counties and the sum of £48,000. Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. i. p. 418 and 419.

monarch, from whom he could not expect any mercy, he, at length, privately retired with his family into Normandy. After his retreat, the nobles and the citizens of London sur-

rendered the metropolis to Swein, A. D. 1013. and acknowledged him as, sole monarch of England. This conqueror, however, died in the following year, and his demise occasioned another contest for the crown.

On the death of Swein, his son, A. D. 1014. Canute, was proclaimed king of England by the Danes; but the English being weary of a foreign yoke, recalled Ethelred to the throne.* An unexpected event, however, prevented Canute from immediately asserting his claim. Harold, his younger brother, had, on receiving the news of his father's death, usurped the throne of Denmark. Canute, therefore, rightly judging it impolitic to neglect his paternal inheritance for a kingdom recently subdued and ripe for revolt, and undoubtedly considering that, in case of any unfavourable turn of affairs in England, he could expect no assistance from Denmark while that country

* During the three successive years 1012, 1013, and 1014, the Danish fleet was generally stationed in the Thames opposite to Greenwich, and their army on the hill above, from whence they made predatory excursions into the adjacent country. Lyson's Envir. of Lond. 4. p. 427 et auct.

was in the possession of a hostile brother, he suddenly embarked his army and set sail for his patrimonial dominions.* Ethelred no sooner saw himself rid of the Danes, than forgetting the promises made to his subjects on his re-call, he again resumed his former maxims of government, and rendered himself odious by acts of tyranny.

The freedom from foreign hostility which England enjoyed after the retreat of the Danes, continued little more than one year. Canute, having expelled his brother from the throne of Denmark, immediately set sail for

England, and unexpectedly landed
A. D. 1016.

a numerous army at Sandwich.† Ethelred sent his son, Edmund, and his son-in-law, Streon, duke of Mercia, with a powerful force to repel the invaders. But the treacherous Edric abandoning the interests of his sovereign and father-in-law, went over to Canute with a considerable part of the army, and used every art to infuse his perfidious principles into the minds of the Mercians. Edmund, after much

* Rapin 1. p. 122. Turner mentions this circumstance very slightly. Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 421.

† Canute sullied his fame by barbarously cutting off the hands and noses of the hostages which the English had delivered to his father Swin. Rapin and Tindal's Notes 1. p. 122. Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 421.

solicitation, prevailed on the king to come to the army, and take the command in person as the only means of putting a stop to the defection. But Ethelred no sooner arrived at the camp, than apprehending a design of delivering him up to the Danes, he suddenly returned to London, where he thought himself in greater security.* Edmund being thus unsupported by his father, betrayed by his brother-in-law, and abandoned by the Mercians, was unable to keep the field against Canute, and therefore retreated with the remainder of his army to London. At this critical period

A. D. 1016.

Ethelred departed this life, in the fiftieth year of his age and the thirty-seventh of his reign, which was one of the most calamitous of those recorded in the history of this or any other country. Equally incapable and unfortunate, he was destitute both of political and military talents, and constantly betrayed or misled by those who possessed his confidence: his counsels were directed by weak and ignorant ministers, and his fleets and armies conducted by cowards and traitors: at his accession to the throne he

* Historians are unable to ascertain whether the king had any ground for this suspicion, or whether it had been suggested by traitors about his person. See Rapin l. p. 122.

found England in a wealthy and flourishing condition ; but he left it at his death in a state of extreme poverty and desolation.*

On the demise of Ethelred, the city of London and the nobles that were there assembled, proclaimed his son, Edmund, king of England ; but the Danes and some of the English declared for Canute. The martial genius and dauntless courage of Edmund, which, with his athletic strength, procured him the surname of Ironside, formed a striking contrast with his father's pusillanimity ; and both the rival kings possessing consummate abilities for war, the contest was carried on with redoubled vigour ; but as Canute had embraced the christian religion, his hostilities were attended with less inhumanity. One of his principal objects was the reduction of London, which he considered as the focus of Edmund's power and his greatest support. In this view he laid siege three different times to that city ; but was repulsed by the valour of the inhabitants. In the last of these sieges he resolved to assault the city both by land and by water ; but the passage of his ships up the Thames being impeded by the bridge, which, at that time, though con-

* In this calamitous reign it was asserted that one Dane was able to put ten Englishmen to flight. Hicke's Thea. Dissert. 103.

structed of timber, appears to have been strongly fortified, he had recourse to an extraordinary and most laborious expedient for surmounting this obstacle. He cut a wide and deep ditch from Rotherhithe, passing in a circuitous direction at a considerable distance from the Thames, and opening into that river opposite to the western extremity of the city.* Having drawn his ships through this canal into the Thames, London was completely invested. Notwithstanding, however, these stupendous efforts, the Danish prince, being repulsed in all his assaults, was finally obliged to relinquish his enterprise.

In regard to the operations in the field during this war, we meet with such confusion among our historians, that it is impossible to develope particulars. What may be in general collected from their accounts is, that the contending parties fought, in the space of one year, five pitched battles with various success, and that in the last the treacherous Edric Streon, duke of Mercia, who had been generously pardoned and received into favour by Edmund, deserted his post and joined the Danes with the body of troops under his command. Why Edmund should be so far

* Pennant's London, p. 281, et auctor.

misled as to place any confidence in a traitor, by whom both his predecessor and himself had been so often deceived and their interests betrayed, is a question to which no historical document furnishes a solution. This battle, however, which was fought at Ashdon, near Waldon, in Essex, was extremely disastrous to Edmund, whose loss was irretrievable.* The flower of the English nobility, all the lords of the most distinguished valour fell that day with their swords in their hands, bravely fighting for their king and the independence of their country.

Edmund, however, by extraordinary efforts, collected another army, and prepared to renew the contest. The two rival princes drew up their forces in sight of each other, and were ready to give the signal for a battle, which was, in all probability, to decide their fate and that of the kingdom, when Edmund, knowing that a defeat would involve him in irretrievable ruin, and confiding in his personal courage and strength, proposed to the Danish king to determine the contest by a single combat.† But Canute declining this

* Tindal's notes on Rapin 1. p. 123.

† The circumstances attending this challenge are variously related by historians. Some affirm and others deny that the combat actually took place. See Tindal's Notes on Rapin 1. p. 124. Turner says, "it is not certain whether the challenge was accepted." *Hist. Ang. Sax.* 1. p. 427.

mode of decision by reason of his inferiority in bodily strength to his antagonist, a treaty of peace was concluded, and the kingdom was divided between the two claimants, with the reversion of the whole to the survivor.* Edmund, however, did not long enjoy his share of the partition. Before he had sat a year on the throne he was assassinated by his treacherous brother-in-law, the duke of Mercia.† The reign of Edmund was short; but his life had been rendered illustrious by his undaunted courage, his consummate prudence, and his generous disposition. His death put the Danish king in peaceable possession of all England, after the Anglo-Saxon monarchy had lasted a hundred and ninety years, reckoning from the time of Egbert and five hundred and sixty-two from its first foundation by Hengist.‡

Canute no sooner saw himself sole monarch of England, than he endeavoured, by every means, to gain the affections of his subjects. He caused justice to be impartially

* The subject of the reversion is not ascertained. Rapin 1. p. 124.

† The fact of his assassination by Edric is sufficiently authenticated; but the mode of its perpetration is variously related. Rapin and Tindal's Notes 1. p. 124.

‡ The first arrival of Hengist was in the year 449: in 455 he seized on Kent, and established his dominion over that province.

administered, and publicly declared that there should be no distinction between the English and the Danes. In order to secure his title, he sent the two sons of Edmund Ironside to the king of Sweden, by whom they were sent to Solomon, king of Hungary, who educated them at his court and married them into his family.* Two sons of Ethelred II. yet remained; but their fate has not been ascertained, though historians insinuate that one of them, at least, was privately dispatched. These uncertain surmises, therefore, it is best to consign to oblivion. Canute, also, in order to strengthen himself by a powerful and commodious alliance, espoused Emma, the widow of Ethelred II. and sister to Richard II. duke of Normandy. And by the marriage articles, the succession to the crown of England was settled on the heirs of her body by Canute, to the exclusion of the children of Ethelred.

Canute having, by these precautions, secured himself against the claims of the Saxon

* Canute is generally accused of sending the two sons of Edmund to Sweden, in order to have them put to death. See Rapa 1. p. 125. Turner 1. p. 432. The story, however, is improbable. Historians say, that Canute was afraid of giving umbrage to the English by their destruction at home; but where would have been the difficulty of privately murdering them in England, without so romantic a scheme of assassination as sending them to Sweden?

princes, his next object was to get rid of some nobles, whose power he dreaded and whose fidelity he distrusted. The chief of these was Edric Streon, duke of Mercia, a notorious traitor in whom he could place no reliance. The insolence of this nobleman soon furnished Canute with a pretext for ridding himself of a turbulent and treacherous subject, by an act of justice highly agreeable to the English. 'Edric having publicly reproached the king for not rewarding him in proportion to his services, among which he reckoned the assassination of Edmund, Canute answered, that as he openly avowed a crime, of which had hitherto been only suspected, he should receive the due punishment. At the same instant, without leaving him time to reply, he commanded him to be immediately beheaded and his body to be thrown into the Thames. Several other lords, whom the king suspected, were banished the realm or removed from their posts, which were filled by others in whom he could place greater confidence. Canute having now established a profound tranquillity, and no longer dreading any revolt, levied a tax for the payment of the Danish troops, of whom a great part was sent back to Denmark.*

* Historians are not agreed as to the amount of this tax. Some state it at £72,000, and others at £80,000. It is also said, that

mented in the nineteenth year of a
 A. D. 1035. glorious, and in the latter part at
 least, a benificent reign,* in which England
 had enjoyed a longer period of peace and
 prosperity than under any of her other mo-
 narchs, except Edgar and his son Edward the
 Martyr, since the arrival of the Saxons.†

Canute, at his death, divided his dominions
 among his three sons. Swein, the eldest,
 had Norway for his portion; to his second
 son, Harold, he bequeathed England; and he
 gave Denmark to Hardycanute, whom he
 had by Emma of Normandy. This division,
 however, threatened England with a civil war.
 The inhabitants of the ancient kingdom of
 Wessex, elected Hardycanute for their king,
 while the people to the north of the Thames
 adhered to the will of Canute and the interests
 of Harold. Hardycanute being then in Den-
 mark, Harold gained Earl Godwin, who
 held the reins of government in Wessex, and
 by his means was acknowledged as king.

* Rapin says that Canute died in 1036, and his commentator, Tindal, adds that his demise happened on the 12th November. Rapin and Tindal's notes 1. p. 126. Turner places his death in 1035. Turner, on the authority of Snorre, the Icelandic historian, says that Canute died at the age of 40. Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 481, note 2.

† Rapin says that Canute was of a small stature, and feeble con-
 stitution. 1. p. 124, &c. Turner represents him as large in stature,
 and very powerful; fair, and distinguished for his beauty; his nose
 thin and aquiline; his eyes bright and fierce. Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 481.

Emma of Normandy perceiving the impossibility of recovering Wessex for Hardykanute, formed the design of placing on the throne one of her sons by Ethelred.* But Godwin, who was a person of deep penetration, soon discovered the plot, and suggested to Harold the destruction of the two Saxon princes as the surest means of preventing its execution. Harold, by the advice of Godwin, invited the two young princes to his court. But Emma suspecting some ill design, resolved not to put both her sons at once into the power of Harold, and therefore contrived first to send Alfred, the eldest, and to retain Edward, the younger, under some pretence, till his brother's return. Alfred set out with a splendid retinue; but was attacked on the road by Earl Godwin and his vassals. The unhappy prince was deprived of his sight, and shut up in the monastery of Ely, where he soon after died. About six hundred of his train were put to death, with the most horrible circumstances of cruelty.† Emma and Edward convinced by this horrible deed of the fate which impended over their heads, saved themselves by a precipitate flight, the former retiring into Flanders, the latter into Normandy.

* Rapin l. p. 128. Hume makes no mention of any such design. See vol. 1.

† Sim. Dunelm. p. 179. M. West. p. 210. Rush. Coll. 4. p. 411.

The king did not long enjoy the fruits of this sanguinary act of perfidious policy, which fixes an indelible stain on his character, as well as on that of Earl Godwin, his execrable agent and counsellor. At the critical moment when his brother Hardycanute was making preparations for wresting the sceptre from his hand, Harold died before he had completed the fourth year of his reign.

A. D. 1039.

The death of Harold, by leaving the succession open to his brother, in all probability preserved England from the horrors of invasion and civil war. The prelates and nobles, both of the English and Danish race, unanimously acknowledged Hardycanute for their sovereign. On his arrival at London, the new monarch was received with great demonstrations of joy. Earl Godwin had, from his past conduct, the greatest reason to apprehend the effects of his resentment; but that subtle courtier soon found means to ingratiate himself with his new sovereign.

Hardycanute commenced his reign with a singular act of vengeance. He caused the body of his brother Harold to be taken out of his grave, and thrown into the Thames; and when it was found by some fishermen, and buried, he ordered it to be dug up again

and flung into the river; but it was fished up again, and interred with great secrecy.

On this, as on every other occasion, earl Godwin was one of the most forward in displaying his rage against the memory of Harold, most probably in the view of justifying himself from the charge of participating in his counsels. But prince Edward being invited to court by the king, preferred an accusation against Godwin for the murder of Alfred, and demanded justice for that crime. Earl Godwin had now occasion for all his address, and knowing the avaricious disposition of the king, sagaciously diverted the storm by a magnificent present previous to his trial.* This courtly manœuvre appeased the resentment of Hardycanute, who now forgot the murder of his brother, and allowed Godwin to be acquitted on making oath of his innocence.

But of all the measures of Hardycanute, that which excited the most general indignation was, his renewing the imposition of Danegeldt, and obliging the nation to raise

* This was a magnificent galley with a gilt stern, rowed by eighty men, each of whom had on his arm a gold bracelet of sixteen ounces weight, with gilded helmets and swords, and a Danish battle-axe adorned with gold and silver, hanging on the left shoulder, with a lance of the same in his right hand. Every part of the vessel and its equipage displayed a corresponding magnificence.

a large sum of money for the payment of the fleet which had brought him from Denmark. At Worcester, two of the collectors being massacred, the king made that city a terrible example of his vengeance. He immediately commanded earl Godwin, duke of Wessex; Leofric, duke of Mercia; and Siward, duke of Northumberland, to collect their forces, and destroy the city with fire and sword. These lords executed his orders only in part, and with great reluctance. The town was plundered by the soldiers, and afterwards consumed with fire. But the inhabitants were suffered to retire to a small island in the Severn, till measures were taken to appease the king, and obtain the pardon of the suppliants. Hardycanute, however, did not long enjoy a crown which he shewed himself so unworthy to wear. He died suddenly at Lambeth, in the third year of his A. D. 1041. reign, at the nuptial feast of a Danish lord. Rapin supposes that his death might be caused by poison, while others ascribe it to excessive intoxication, a conjecture far from improbable, as he frequently used to spend whole days and nights in feasting and carousing.* His usual habits of intem-

* Rapin, with Tindal's notes, l. p. 129.

perance were so well known, that notwithstanding his robust constitution, which caused the epithet of Hardy to be prefixed to his name, his sudden death excited little surprise, and certainly still less regret. As he lived, so he died, universally detested; and historians inform us that the anniversary of his death was, during the space of four hundred years, celebrated in England as a holiday, under the appellation of Hogstide.*

On the death of Hardycanute without issue, Edward, surnamed the Confessor, son of Ethelred II. and Emma of Normandy, was elected king by the unanimous consent of the nation. This setting aside of the Danish succession, without any contest or struggle, may be regarded as one of those unexplained and indeed inexplicable facts which are often met with in history. We are told that a general council having been called, earl Godwin made a speech, in which he exhibited a striking picture of the calamities which England had suffered from the Danes. In this oration he is said to have recalled to the remembrance of the assembly those unhappy times, when, if an Englishman and a Dane met at a bridge, the former durst not

* See Tindal's notes on Rapin, 1. p. 189; or Hockday Spelm. Gloss. voce Hockday.

advance one step till the latter had passed, and when an Englishman meeting a Dane, and neglecting to make a low bow, was sure to be severely beaten.* It is further added, that this harangue made such an impression on the assembly, as to produce an unanimous resolution that no prince of Danish race should again sit on the throne. Some even pretend that all the Danes were expelled, and one of their own historians asserts that they were extirpated in one night, by a general massacre.† But in the existing circumstances of the times, their expulsion or massacre must be regarded as equally impossible. The Danes had long possessed all the northern and eastern parts of the country, and even in the heart of the kingdom they appear to have been as numerous as the English, whose superiority was confined to the city of London, the counties of Middlesex and Essex, and the provinces south of the Thames. After having repeatedly ravaged, and at length conquered the whole kingdom, they had

* Rapa 1. p. 130.

† *Enque nocte, exiguo temporis momento, vetustam Danorum dominationem ac longo multoque Majorum sudore et sanguine partum imperium ita pessumdedit ut vix unquam postea Danos fortuna respexerit.* Pontanus lib. 5.—“That night, in one short moment of time, the ancient domination of the Danes, and that empire which had been acquired by the sweat and the blood of their ancestors, was so completely subverted, that fortune scarcely ever more smiled on that nation.”

completely established their dominion, and four Danish monarchs had successively swayed the sceptre of England. Such being the state of the case, we are left at a loss to discover what became of those mighty Danes, who seem to have disappeared at once, and after the accession of Edward the Confessor, are no more noticed in English history than if they had never existed. This constitutes an historical problem, of which Rapin ingenuously acknowledges himself unable to give the solution.* Hume, however, attempts to cast some light on this dark subject, and his view of the affair involves the most rational conjectures that can be formed, relative to this extraordinary and unprecedented révolution.

The death of the two last kings, without issue, afforded the English a favourable opportunity of shaking off the Danish yoke. Swein, king of Norway, the eldest son of Canute the Great was absent, and there was not in the kingdom a prince of the Danish race to prefer a claim to the crown. Young Edward happened to be at court when Hardycanute expired, and though the descendants

* Rapin says, "This is one of the most difficult passages in the whole English history: which way soever it is viewed, insurmountable difficulties occur." Hist. Eng. l. p. 130.

of Edmund Ironside were the next heirs of the Saxon line, yet their absence, in so remote a country as Hungary, appeared a sufficient reason for their exclusion to a people like the English, who had been so little accustomed to observe a regular order in the succession of their monarchs. But the result of the affair, in a great measure, depended on earl Godwin, whose wealth and influence, supported by his powerful alliances, his high offices, and the superiority of his genius, gave him a preponderancy over the rest of the nobles. Godwin was no friend to the Danes; but, on the other hand, there subsisted a deadly animosity between him and Edward, on account of the murder of Alfred, for which he had been publicly prosecuted by that prince in the reign of Hardykanute. Their common friends here interposed, and represented the necessity of a reconciliation. Godwin, however, in promoting the interests of others, never neglected his own: before he engaged in Edward's cause, he extorted from him a promise to marry his daughter. Having stipulated this alliance, the earl summoned a general council, and took every measure for securing the succession to Edward. The English were zealous for his interests, and unanimous in their resolutions: the Danes being without a

leader, were dispirited and divided: any small opposition that appeared in this assembly was easily overborne, and Edward being elected king, was crowned at Winchester,

amidst the greatest demonstrations
A. D. 1042.

of public joy and affection.* The mildness of his character soon reconciled the Danes to his government, and the distinction between the two nations gradually disappeared. "The Danes were interspersed with the English in most of the provinces: they spoke nearly the same language: they differed little in their manners and laws: domestic dissensions in Denmark prevented, for some years, any powerful invasion from thence which might awaken past animosities; and as the Norman conquest, which ensued soon after, reduced both nations to equal subjection, there is no farther mention in history of any difference between them."†

Edward distinguished the commencement of his reign by an act of severity towards his mother, whom he confined during the remainder of her life in a monastery, for her partiality to the children of her second hus-

* Edward was raised to the throne chiefly through the interest of Godwin, earl of Wessex; Leofric, earl of Chester; and Living, bishop of Worcester. Ingulph. p. 62.

† Hume Hist Eng 1. ch 3. p. 160.

band Canute, and her neglect of himself and his brother in their adversity.* And as her conduct in those particulars had rendered her unpopular, this harsh treatment of a parent, though severely censured by a dispassionate posterity, did not, at that time, meet with a very general disapprobation. But the partiality which Edward shewed to the Normans gave great disgust to his subjects. He had been educated in Normandy, and had formed intimate connections with many of the principal persons of that country, as well as imbibed a strong predilection for their manners. Soon after his accession the court of England was filled with Normans, who being distinguished both by the royal favour, and by a degree of cultivation superior to that which the English had attained in those ages, rendered their language and customs fashionable in the kingdom. The courtiers affected to imitate those polished strangers in their dress, their equipage, and entertainments; and the French language began to be generally studied. The church, in particular, felt the effects of this foreign influence: some

* Many other ridiculous stories have been handed down to posterity; such as the king's accusation against her for incontinency, and her miraculous purgation, &c. which have no foundation in authentic history.

of the highest dignities were conferred on Normans, and three ecclesiastics of that nation were promoted to the bishoprics of Dorchester and London, and the archiepiscopal see of Canterbury.

This influence of the Normans excited the jealousy of the English, and especially of earl Godwin, whose power rendered his disaffection extremely dangerous. Besides being duke or earl of Wessex, he had the counties of Kent and Sussex annexed to his government. His eldest son, Swein, possessed the same authority in the counties of Oxford, Berks, Gloucester, and Hereford; and his second son, Harold, was duke of East Anglia and governor of Essex. The great authority of this family was supported by immense possessions and powerful alliances; and the abilities, as well as the ambition of Godwin and his sons, contributed to render it still more dangerous to the crown. While this powerful nobleman daily increased his popularity, by complaining of the influence of the Normans in the government of the kingdom, an unexpected accident brought animosity into action. Eustace, count of Boulogne, passing through Dover on his return from a visit to the king, an affray took place between some of his train and the inhabitants: about twenty were killed on each side; and the count having

narrowly escaped, hastened back to court, where he made a complaint of the insult.*

Edward immediately ordered Godwin to repair to Dover, and punish the inhabitants; but this nobleman, who desired to encourage rather than repress the popular discontents against foreigners, refused obedience, and endeavoured to throw the whole blame of the riot on the count and his retinue. The king was extremely incensed at this refusal to obey his command; and the archbishop of Canterbury, with the rest of the Normans, endeavoured to increase his resentment.

The earl perceiving a rupture unavoidable, began to prepare for the contest. Under pretence of repelling an incursion of the Welsh into Herefordshire, he and his sons levied, without the king's orders, a considerable body of troops. Edward applied for protection to Leofric, duke of Mercia, and Siward, duke of Northumberland, whose jealousy of the greatness and aspiring ambition of Godwin, as well as their duty to the crown, engaged them in the defence of their sovereign; and the people who respected the long race of their native kings, from whom he was descended, flocked from all quarters.

* *Malms.* p. 81. *Brompt.* p. 942.

to join his standard and support his authority. The royal army soon became so considerable, that Edward having no longer any thing to fear from the efforts of rebellion, convened a general council, before which Godwin and his sons were summoned to trial. These noblemen, however, refusing to appear without a safe conduct, and hostages for their security, were banished the kingdom, and all their estates were confiscated. Godwin, and three of his sons, Garth, Swein, and Tosti, fled for protection to Baldwin, earl of Flanders.* Harold and Leófwín, two other of his sons, took shelter in Ireland. The queen Editha, daughter of Godwin, was shut up in a monastery; and the greatness of this family, which had lately been so formidable, seemed to be for ever overthrown.†

But Godwin was too strongly supported by alliances, both foreign and domestic, to remain in a state of exile and poverty, without making an effort for his re-establishment. The earl of Flanders furnished him with some ships, which he manned with freebooters of different nations, and his son Harold proceeding on the same plan, met with similar success

* Tosti, or Toston, had married the daughter of the earl of Flanders.

† Turner's Hist. Ang. Sax. i. p. 453.

in Ireland. Putting to sea with their piratical squadrons, Godwin harassed the eastern, and Harold the western coasts of the kingdom. Edward, in order to put a stop to their depredations, equipped a fleet superior in force to that of the rebels, and its appearance obliged Godwin to retire into the ports of Flanders. But while this nobleman was employed in augmenting his force, the English fleet, for some reasons which historians have not ascertained with precision, was laid up in the Thames and suffered to go to decay. Godwin, on the contrary, keeping his ships and his men during the space of two years in readiness for action, again set sail and arrived at the Isle of Wight, where he was joined by Harold with a squadron from Ireland. Godwin and his son, Harold, being now masters of the sea, immediately sailed up the Thames to London, where nothing was seen but consternation and confusion. The court was terrified into an accommodation. Earl Godwin and his sons were restored to their estates, honours, and offices, on condition of giving hostages for their future fidelity. The queen was liberated from her confinement, and reinstated in her royal dignity. And the earl having delivered his son, Ulnoth, and his grandson, Hacune, as hostages, they were

committed by Edward to the care of the duke of Normandy.*

The death of earl Godwin, which happened soon after while sitting at table with the king, made no material alteration in regard to the situation of the family.† Harold succeeded to all the honours and offices of his father; and as he equalled him in sagacity and courage, and excelled him in address and politeness, he acquired a still greater influence over both the nobles and people. The government of Northumberland, vacant by the death of Earl Siward, was conferred on Tosti, the brother of Harold; and the king, overawed by the power of the Godwin family, was impelled by fear to load them with favours.

The king, being far advanced in years, and having no issue, began to think of appointing a successor, and invited from Hungary his nephew, Edward, son of his elder brother, Edmund Ironside, and legitimate heir of the

* Robert the Norman, archbishop of Canterbury, was soon after banished by a sentence of the general council of the nation, and Stigand, a friend of Godwin, was advanced to that see in his stead. *Rapin* 1. p. 133.

† An unauthenticated tale has been handed down to posterity, concerning earl Godwin being choked by a morsel of meat, in punishment of a perjured imprecation. From the manner of his death his disorder appears to have been an apoplexy. See Tindal's notes on *Rapin* 1. p. 134.

Saxon line. That prince, whose succession to the crown would have been undisputed, came into England, accompanied by his only son, Edgar, surnamed Atheling, and his two daughters, Margaret and Christina, who were all born in Hungary; but his death, soon after his arrival, gave rise to new plans and intrigues. The king perceived that the power and ambition of Harold had prompted him to aim at the crown; that the people marked him out as the person most worthy to reign; and that Edgar, from his youth and inexperience, was very unfit to contend with so popular and enterprising a rival. The animosity which he had long borne, to earl Godwin, rendered him averse to the succession of his son; and he could not, without extreme reluctance, contemplate the exaltation of a family that was stained with the blood of his brother, Alfred, and had risen to greatness on the ruins of the royal authority. These considerations induced him to cast his eye towards his kinsman, William duke of Normandy, as the only person whose power, abilities, and military reputation, could support any destination that he might make in his favour to the exclusion of Harold. The Duke, indeed, had, some time before, paid a visit to Edward, who is said

to have made him a promise of the succession ; but some of our best historians affirm, that no mention was then made of the affair, and the subsequent invitation of the legitimate heir from Hungary corroborates the assertion.*

Harold, in the mean while, was using every means to increase his popularity and pave his way to the throne. In this view he solicited, and by his protestations of loyalty, extorted the king's consent to release the hostages which his father had delivered, and of which he represented the further detention as unnecessary. Having procured the royal permission, Harold, in order to effect his purpose, set out with a numerous retinue on his voyage to Normandy, but was driven by a tempest on the territory of Guy, count de Ponthieu, who detained him prisoner, and demanded an exorbitant sum for his ransom. Harold found means to convey to the duke of Normandy an account of his situation, and of the harsh treatment which he had met with from the mercenary disposition of the

* Ingulphus, who was an Englishman by birth, but secretary to the duke of Normandy, whom he accompanied to England, says, "*de successione autem regni spes adhuc aut mentio nulla facta inter eos fuit.*" But concerning the succession there was not, at that time, (i. e.) at the time of William's visit to the court of England, any hope excited or mention made between them." Ingulph. p. 65.

count of Ponthieu. William was immediately sensible of the importance of the incident. He knew the intentions of Edward in his favour, and had already fixed his eyes on the English crown. He foresaw that Harold was the man who, above all others, would have it in his power either to facilitate or oppose the execution of his design ; and he considered it as absolutely necessary to gain, if possible, one who might be so powerful a friend or so formidable an enemy. William, therefore, sent a messenger to Guy to demand the liberation of Harold ; and that baron, not daring to incur the displeasure of so powerful a prince, delivered his prisoner into the hands of the Normans, who conducted him to Roan. William received him with every demonstration of friendship and respect ; and after shewing himself disposed to comply with his request in releasing the hostages, he disclosed to him the great secret of his pretensions to the crown of England, and of the will which the king intended to make in his favour.* He desired the assist-

* William must have been here in a considerable dilemma in regard to his conduct towards Harold. He could not be ignorant of the design of that nobleman on the throne ; and he had no other alternative than either to detain him as a prisoner, or to gain him by persuasion and promises. The former proceeding, considering the great power and influence of Harold, might have involved William

ance of Harold in perfecting his designs, and promised to reward him in proportion to the magnitude of the service. Harold, who, as well as the whole English nation, had hitherto been totally ignorant of the affair, was surprised at this declaration of the duke; but his situation suggested the necessity of a feigned compliance with every demand. Having, therefore, agreed to marry the daughter of William,* and made some other stipulations in order to shew himself sincere; he renounced for himself all pretensions to the crown of England, and promised to support the will of Edward and the claim of the duke of Normandy. William required him to confirm his promises by an oath, and in order to render it more obligatory, employed an artifice well suited to the superstition of the age. He secretly conveyed under the altar on which Harold was to swear, the relics of some of the most revered saints of the church. When Harold had taken the oath, William uncovered the relics and admonished him to observe religiously an engagement which had

in a war with England, which must have proved fatal to his hopes, as all the strong places in the southern parts of the island were in the hands of that nobleman's creatures.

* The princess being yet too young for marriage, remained at the court of Normandy. The intended nuptials, therefore, were never solemnized. Rapa 1. p. 136.

been ratified by so tremendous a sanction.* After every thing had thus been settled, the English nobleman was dismissed by the duke of Normandy with every mark of honour, esteem, and confidence.†

Harold no sooner saw himself at liberty, than his ambition suggested casuistry sufficient to justify the violation of an oath extorted from him by fear, and which, if fulfilled, might subject his country to the dominion of foreigners. He continued, with redoubled assiduity, to increase his popularity and the number of his partizans; to reconcile the minds of the English to the idea of his succession; and to revive their

* Hume 1. p. 175 and auct. Rapin only says, that Harold swore on the holy gospels. 1. p. 136.

† The transactions which took place between Harold and William from this time to the battle of Hastings, are curiously represented in the celebrated tapestry of Bayeux, which was formerly kept in the cathedral of that city, where I have seen it many years ago. It was kept carefully locked up; except on midsummer's eve and the seven days following, when it was annually exposed to public inspection; but it has, since the commencement of the war, been removed to the museum Napoleon at Paris. The limits of this work do not permit me to give a description of this curious monument of antiquity. The ground is white canvas; it is 1 foot 11 inches in depth, and 212 feet in length, exhibiting figures of men, horses, ships, &c. The human figures are entirely destitute of symmetry or proportion: the ships are all single masted. It is amply described by M. Lancelot Mém. de l'Acad. des inscrip. Tom. 9. and 12, and by Ducarel Ang. Norm. Antiq. p. 78, &c. and concisely by Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 467, &c. A modern traveller justly observes, that it is an interesting piece to a person who can transport himself in idea back to the 11th century Kotzebue Travels to Paris 3. p. 218. Tradition ascribes it to Matilda, wife of the conqueror, and the ladies of her court.

aversion to the Normans. While Harold thus neglected nothing that might contribute to the accomplishment of his designs, fortune threw in his way two incidents which concurred to heighten his reputation.

The Welsh having renewed their incursions under Griffith, their king, whose depredations had rendered his name terrible to the English borderers, Harold perceived that nothing could be more acceptable to the public, or more honourable to himself, than the suppression of so dangerous an enemy. He accordingly planned, in conjunction with his brother, Tosti, an expedition against Wales. Having scoured the open country, and pursued the Welsh into the recesses of their mountains, he reduced them at last to such distress, that they sent him the head of their king as the price of peace.* This event shewed that Harold was formidable to the enemies of the state, and confirmed the English in their opinion that he, who knew so well how to defend, deserved to wear the crown.

In this expedition Harold had given unquestionable proofs of his conduct and valour.

* Turner's Hist. Ang. Sax. i. p. 458, and authorities there quoted.

The next occurrence that added new lustre to his glory, afforded him an opportunity of displaying his moderation and equity. His brother, Tosti, duke of Northumberland, had so greatly abused his power, that the inhabitants had revolted and expelled him from his government. Morcar and Edwin, two brothers, whose influence was great in those parts, concurred in the insurrection; and the former being elected duke, advanced with an army to oppose Harold, who was commissioned by the king to chastise the Northumbrians. On the approach of the royal army, Morcar sent a deputation to Harold to inform him of the causes of the insurrection, declaring that neither he nor his followers had any disloyal intentions; but that they had been impelled to take arms by the tyranny of Tosti, and were determined to perish rather than submit to be under his power. This vigorous remonstrance was accompanied by such a detail of well authenticated facts, that Harold abandoned the cause of his brother, and by his intercession obtained the king's pardon for the Northumbrians, with the confirmation of Morcar in the government of their province. He also espoused the sister of that nobleman, and by his interest procured for Edwin, the younger

brother, the government of Mercia.* Tosti, in a rage, departed the kingdom, and took refuge with his father-in-law, Baldwin, earl of Flanders.

By this marriage Harold broke all measures with the duke of Normandy. He was now in a situation which rendered it no longer necessary to dissemble. By his possessions, his offices, and his alliances, almost all England was engaged in his interest, and seeing himself the idol of the nation, he openly aspired to the succession. The people, at the same time, unanimously declared their opinion that, as it was necessary to set aside the royal family on account of the youth and imbecility of Edgar, the only surviving heir, there was no one so capable of wielding the sceptre as a nobleman of great power, of mature age, of approved courage, and consummate abilities, exercised and perfected by long experience. Edward saw the difficulties, relative to the disposal of the crown, too great for him to encounter; and though his inveterate prepossessions against the Godwin family rendered him averse to the pretensions of Harold, he took only feeble and irresolute

* It has been already observed, that the stipulated marriage between Harold and the duke of Normandy's daughter, had not taken place,

measures for securing the succession to the duke of Normandy. In this state of inde-

Jan. 5th, 1066. cision he was surprised by a sickness, of which he died, in the sixty-fifth year of his age, and the twenty-fifth of his reign.

This monarch was the last of the race of king Egbert, that reigned in England. Had not his hatred to his wife and her family determined him to abstain, as it is said, from consummating his marriage, he might probably have transmitted his crown to a long line of descendants, and preserved his kingdom from the most direful calamities. Edward appears not to have been remarkable either for his virtues or his vices: the peace and prosperity which England enjoyed while he swayed the sceptre, are rather to be ascribed to the circumstances of the times, than to the abilities of the monarch; and the whole history of his reign is only the history of earl Godwin and his son Harold.* His only virtues appear to have been an extensive charity, an easy kind of good nature, and a superstitious piety. The monks, who en-

* The most important transactions of Edward were his compilation of a code of laws, which met with the general approbation of his subjects. See Hume 1. p. 178. And his building of Westminster Abbey, which was afterwards taken down and re-built by Henry III. See Tindal's notes on Rapin 1. p. 136.

joyed his favours, cried up his sanctity and gave him the pompous title of Confessor, although he never experienced any troubles on account of religion. Not contented with giving him a passport to Paradise, they assigned him an eminent place in the calendar, though from his continued severity to his mother, and his inveterate aversion to his virtuous and beautiful queen, he seems to have had little right to that honourable distinction.* But as Agamemnon was happy in having a Homer to sing his exploits, so Edward was fortunate in meeting with monkish historians to celebrate his sanctity. They assure us that he was favoured with divine revelations, and with the special privilege of curing the scrofula. This miraculous power was long supposed to have descended to his successors, some of whom were far from being saints; and the practise of touching for that disorder, was continued by the English monarchs until the revolution. Since that time the royal family has had the good sense to lay aside these ridiculous pretensions, and the power of working miracles is now left to the saints of unenlightened ages.†

* An eminent historian says, that queen Editha was distinguished for her beauty, her virtue, and her learning. Ingulph. p. 62.

† Hume says, the present reigning family first laid aside the practise of touching for the scrofula. Vol. 1. p. 179. Rapin ascribes its

Harold had so judiciously taken his measures, that on the decease of Edward he ascended the throne with as little opposition as if he had succeeded by hereditary right. The citizens of London were zealously attached to his party; the bishops and clergy were his adherents; and all the powerful nobility connected with him by alliance, friendship, or interest, willingly seconded his pretensions. Having assembled his partizans, he was elected king by their unanimous suffrages; and on Jan. 6th, A. D. 1066. the day immediately following Edward's death, he was crowned by Aldred, archbishop of York. If any were averse to the measure, they were obliged to conceal their sentiments, and the whole nation seemed joyfully to acquiesce in his elevation.*

The duke of Normandy, in the mean while, was preparing to wrest from Harold

cession to William III. Vol. 1. p. 137. The kings of France used formerly to pretend to the same power. Tindal's notes on Rapin 1 p. 137.

* As the historians of those times were most of them prejudiced in favour either of Harold or William, it is impossible to ascertain the mode in which the former was elected. Some say that Harold was elected by the Wittenagemot or general council of the nation; some ascribe his election to an assembly of his own partizans; others affirm that he seized the crown without any formality, a fact which is scarcely probable. See Rapin and Tindal's notes l. p. 138.

his newly acquired sceptre. He was not ignorant that their claims were to be decided by the sword ; but, in order to save appearances, he made an offer of negotiation, and by his ambassadors required Harold to deliver up to him the crown of England, in conformity to Edward's intentions and to his own solemn oath. Harold replied, that the testament of Edward, in case any such existed, was illegal, as the laws did not allow the king to dispose of the crown at his pleasure, especially to a foreigner ; that he himself had been placed on the throne by those in whom the right of election resided, and could not resign it without a breach of the trust reposed in him by the nation ; that the oath alluded to being extorted, was null and void ; and, finally, that he knew how to defend his title against all who should oppose his claim. In consequence of this declaration, both parties prepared for the contest. Harold endeavoured, by all possible means, to attach the people to his interests. He diminished the taxes and adopted other popular measures ; and the English, charmed with his beneficent administration, resolved to devote their lives and fortunes to support him on the throne. William, on the other hand, sensible that his object was

attainable only by arms, began to collect a force commensurate to the magnitude of the enterprise.

The greatest difficulty that the duke experienced, was the raising of money for so expensive an undertaking. The states of Normandy refused their concurrence, alleging that their country was already exhausted by successive wars; that how just soever his claims to the crown of England might be, no advantage could accrue to their country from such an acquisition; and that their allegiance did not oblige them to engage in wars, in which the state had no concern. The enterprising spirit of individuals, however, compensated the parsimony of the states. Numbers of the Norman nobility and gentry not only advanced money, but volunteered to serve in the expedition, and in particular, William Fitz-Osborn engaged to fit out forty ships at his own expense. The address and the promises of the duke diffused the same ardour through the neighbouring countries. The martial barons and knights of Flanders, Bretagne, Boulogne, Anjou, Maine, and Poitou, crowded to his standard on condition of receiving territorial possessions in England. And although the aggrandizement of the duke of Normandy was

evidently detrimental to the interests of the French monarchy, yet the king, Philip I. being a minor, William had so far gained Baldwin, earl of Flanders, the regent, as to prevail on him not to oppose his undertaking*. The invariable policy of the see of Rome, was to favour those princes who, by placing themselves under its protection, acknowledged its supreme authority, and in order to give some appearance of justice to his claim, he solicited and obtained the approbation of the Pope, who not only sent him a consecrated banner, but issued an edict of excommunication against all those who should oppose the execution of his designs. The sanction of the holy see was extremely serviceable to the duke, in enabling him to justify his measures in the eyes of the christian world, and in removing any scruples that might arise in the breasts of those who engaged in his cause. And in order to assure himself of temporal as well as spiritual protection, he concluded a treaty with the emperor, Henry IV. who engaged to march with the whole force of Germany against any one that should invade Normandy during William's expedition to England.†

* WIL. Poict. 197. Odor. Vit. 494.

† P. Daniel Hist. de France, Tom. 3. p. 93. W. Poict. p. 198.

While the duke, with active diligence and consummate policy, was preparing for his grand enterprise, the English monarch, who expected and was ready to meet the attack, was suddenly called to repel another formidable invasion. Harold, as already observed, had, before his accession, espoused the cause of the Northumbrians, who had expelled his brother, earl Toston, from the government of their province on account of his tyranny. Toston could never forgive this affront, and nourished, ever after, an implacable hatred against his brother. The accession of Harold to the throne, contributed to increase his enmity; and having obtained some ships from Flanders, he harassed the English coasts, for some time, with desultory attacks.* In one of his maritime expeditions, he either was driven or went designedly to Norway, where he persuaded the king, Harold Harfagar, that England, being divided by opposite factions, and the whole nation averse to the existing government, presented a favourable opportunity for an easy conquest; and the Norwegian monarch, whose imagination was inflamed with the prospect of so glorious a prize, agreed to employ his whole force in attempting its attainment.

* Tosti was encouraged by the duke of Normandy. P. Daniel *Hist. de France*, Tom. 3. p. 90.

The preparations for the expedition being soon completed, the king of Norway and Toston, with a formidable fleet and army, sailed for the English coast, and entering the Tyne, pillaged the country on both sides in a dreadful manner. Having again put to sea, and steered to the southward, they entered the Humber, and proceeding up that river and the Ouse, landed their forces at Riccal, six miles from York, and recommenced their ravages. The two English earls, Morcar and Edwin, who commanded in that quarter, attempted to stop the progress of the invaders ; but the English army being cut to pieces in a bloody engagement at the village of Fulford, near York, that city surrendered by capitulation. Harold, in the mean while, having marched with great expedition from the south, the Norwegians began to retreat towards the Humber in order to preserve a communication with their fleet. The English monarch, by forced marches, came up with them at Stamford bridge, about seven miles to the east of York, where he found them intrenched in an advantageous position on the eastern side of the Derwent, which ran along their front and protected them from any attack, except by the bridge of which they were masters. In

his circumstances, however, as he expected an invasion from Normandy, he was sensible of the necessity of bringing this contest to a speedy issue. He, therefore, gave orders for an immediate attack of the bridge. The Norwegians bravely defended that post on which the safety of their army depended; and history commemorates the extraordinary prowess of one of their warriors, who, with his battle axe, for a considerable time singly disputed the passage with the English army, and is said to have killed no less than forty of the assailants with his own hand. This brave Norwegian at length being overpowered by numbers and slain, the English became masters of the bridge, and rushing forward with resistless impetuosity, entirely routed the enemy. The two armies here engaged, each consisting of at least sixty thousand men, were the most formidable that had hitherto appeared in an English field of battle, and the victory was the most complete that had ever been gained by an English monarch. The king of Norway and earl Toston, were both slain; and Harold, who daily expecting a new invasion, had no time to lose, having permitted the Norwegians to retire to their own country, twenty small vessels were found sufficient to carry away

the shattered remains of that numerous army which Harfargar had brought in three hundred, or according to others, in five hundred ships, from Norway.*

After this memorable battle, which according to the best accounts was fought on the 20th September, A. D. 1066, only nine days elapsed before the duke of Normandy landed

his army at Pevensey, in Sussex.
Sept. 29th,
1066.

Harold, on receiving intelligence of the invasion, returned by hasty marches from the north, in order to give battle to the Normans, whom he did not consider as more formidable than the Norwegians. On his arrival at London, he reviewed his army, and found it greatly diminished, not only by the late battle, but also by desertions, occasioned by the discontent of his troops. The English monarch indeed had been guilty of a piece of impolicy, unpardonable in a military commander. In that age it was one of the established rules of war, that all the spoils should be fairly divided among the officers and soldiers, in proportion to military rank.†

* Historians vary considerably in regard to the number of the Norwegian ships. See Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 1. p. 479. Note 59.

† Kings themselves had no other part of the spoils than that which was allotted them by the rules of war. Of this we have a remarkable instance in the history of the Franks. The army of Clovis, the

The plunder of the Norwegian camp at Stamford bridge, had afforded an immense booty; but Harold, instead of making the customary division, had retained the whole for the purpose of carrying on the war against the duke of Normandy, without laying too great taxes on his subjects, whose affection he was extremely desirous to preserve. In his circumstances it was certainly requisite to secure the attachment both of the people and the army; but at so critical a juncture, he might have perceived that the soldiery was the principal support on which he could depend for success, in the decisive contest which was about to take place. All the nobility of the kingdom, however, were eager to support the cause of their monarch, and repaired in crowds to his standard.

The duke of Normandy in the mean while advanced along the coast from Pevensey to Hastings; but the contradictory accounts of

founder of the French monarchy, having pillaged a church, the bishop sent a deputation to the king, requesting that a particular vase might be restored. Clovis promised to grant the bishop's request if the vase should be allotted to him. The division was made at Soissons, and the plunder being all placed in a heap in the middle of the army, the king requested that they would give him that vase over and above his share. All appeared willing to gratify their monarch except one soldier, who lifting up his battle-axe, struck the vase with great violence, exclaiming in a haughty and ferocious tone, "You shall have nothing here, but that to which the lot gives you a right." *Gregorius Turon. Hist. Francorum lib. 2. cap. 27.*

historians leave us in a state of uncertainty in regard to his first proceedings. Some say that he erected a fort at Pevensey, in order to protect his shipping, and to favour his retreat in case of necessity.* Others affirm that he sent back his fleet, and some historians say that he caused his ships to be burned, that his followers might have no hope of safety but in the success of their arms.† At Hastings, he determined to wait the approach of Harold, who having advanced within about nine miles of the Norman camp, resolved to hazard a battle, contrary to the prudent counsel of his brother, who advised him to stand on the defensive, representing the disadvantages under which the enemy must lie, in being obliged to winter in a hostile country, in which they had neither magazines nor fortified towns. But it seems that Harold elated with his victory over the Norwegians, had conceived too sanguine hopes of success, and his precipitancy in hazarding the fate of the kingdom on the event of a battle, cost him his crown and his life.

* William constructed forts and military works both at Pevensey and Hastings. Rapin 1. p. 140. Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 1.

† Will. Poict. p. 201. Camden follows this account. Britann. 159. This, however, appears improbable, although it was a measure since adopted by Cortez on his invasion of Mexico. See also Ancienne Chronique de Normandie ap. Turner. 1. p. 489.

Those military transactions, which suddenly decide the destiny of nations, merit a conspicuous place in the pages of history ; but the contradictions and inconsistencies which are generally found in the relations of such events, render it impossible to distinguish with precision any thing more than the outlines of the picture. Such is the case in regard to the memorable battle of Hastings : amidst the confused accounts of historians, it would be in vain to attempt to give the reader any distinct idea of the various manœuvres of the two armies :* it must therefore suffice to mention a few circumstances, in respect of which, writers in general agree. The Normans appear to have surpassed the English in piety as well as in prudence : they spent the night which preceded the battle in offering up prayers to the Almighty for success, while the latter were employed in carousing and singing, as if they had been certain of victory. About seven in the morning, the two armies engaged, and the murderous conflict continued the greatest part of the day, without any perceptible advantage on either side. The afternoon was far advanced, and the issue of

October 14th,
A.D. 1066,

* Rapin confesses himself bewildered amidst the confused accounts of this battle. Vol. 1. p. 141.

the contest still doubtful, when the duke finding himself unable to make any impression on the English battalions, ordered his troops to fall back, without breaking their ranks. The English seeing the Normans give way, supposed themselves sure of the victory, and rushing impetuously forward, threw themselves into confusion. At this moment the Normans perceiving the success of their stratagem, suddenly rallied, and made a dreadful slaughter among the broken ranks of the English. In this emergency, Harold made every possible effort to rally his troops, and so far succeeded as to draw up in order of battle a considerable number of infantry, who so bravely sustained the reiterated attacks of the Normans, that at the approach of night the victory was still undecided.* William, however, resolved to make a last effort to drive the English from their position. The Normans assailed them with the most determined resolution; and the English sustained the attack with equal intrepidity. In this sanguinary conflict Harold was slain by an arrow; and his death decided the fate of the day. The English disheartened at the

* Many of the particulars of this battle are represented in the tapestry of Bayeux.

loss of their monarch, fled in the utmost confusion. As long as daylight lasted the Normans continued the pursuit, and made a dreadful slaughter of the fugitives, putting all to the sword without mercy. According to the generally received accounts, above sixty thousand of the English, with most of their nobility, besides the king and his two brothers, fell on that fatal day. This ensanguined victory cost the Normans six thousand men; but it must be allowed that fortune had been peculiarly favourable to the duke, who, although he had, according to William of Malmsbury's account, no fewer than three horses killed under him, did not receive any wound. The darkness of the night saved the remnant of the English army, which retreated under the conduct of the earls Morcar and Edwin, who had the good fortune to be among the few English nobles who escaped the slaughter.

Such are the most authentic accounts that history affords of the memorable battle of Hastings, which decided the fate of England; and the long duration of the conflict, which lasted from seven in the morning till night, together with the almost incredible slaughter of her warriors and nobles, shews how obstinately the possession of her crown was con-

tested. But while impartial history cannot refuse the just tribute of praise to the magnanimity and courage of Harold, the sound judgment of the politician, and the cautious commander will impeach his prudence, in staking the fate of his kingdom on the event of a battle. Had the English monarch contented himself with harassing the enemy, and intercepting his supplies, the Normans, exposed to the hardships of a winter's campaign in a hostile country, and wanting provisions, would in all probability have had reason to repent of their expedition. But when providence decrees the downfall of a nation or dynasty, a judicial infatuation seems to cloud the understandings of its chiefs. Had Darius acted on the defensive, and avoided a general * engagement with Alexander, the Macedonian hero would have been glad to repass the Hellespont, and leave him in quiet possession of the Persian empire. History affords numerous instances of crowns lost and kingdoms ruined by rash and inconsiderate proceedings.

After the battle of Hastings, the English made scarcely any further resistance;* and the

* Dover might have stood a long siege; but the consternation was so great that it surrendered in a few days. Rapin vol. 1. p. 166.

army being almost annihilated, the whole nation submitted to the conqueror. Their monarch had fallen in the conflict, and Edward Atheling, the legitimate heir, was too young and too inexperienced to protect them against a powerful invader, at the head of a numerous, well-disciplined, and victorious army. The Papal authority gave a sanction to William's pretensions, and the prelates, who were then assembled at London, expecting greater advantages from promoting than from opposing his views, exerted their influence in persuading the nobility and the citizens to a prompt submission. On his approach to that capital, they sent a deputation to make him an offer of the crown, which he accepted as their voluntary gift, and promised to govern them with equity. In consequence of these arrangements, William was crowned at London: the rest of the kingdom, following the example of the clergy and the metropolis, acknowledged his authority: and thus, by a concurrence of favourable circumstances, he ascended a throne which might have cost years or even ages of contest.*

* The conquest of England employed the arms of the Saxons about 170 years, and those of the Danes 183 years, if we reckon from A.D. 833, when they made their first descent, to the last battle between Edmund and Canute, A.D. 1016.

Historians have considered this revolution as extremely beneficial to England, and as the first step towards her present aggrandizement. But there is sufficient reason to dispute the truth of this opinion.* It cannot be denied that from her alliance with Normandy, England derived a great accession of strength under her first Norman kings. But this strength was exhausted by their continental wars, in which the interests of this country was not concerned. In process of time, Normandy, with all its real or supposed advantages, was lost; and after an immense expenditure of blood and treasure, the English dominions were confined within their former boundaries. The aggrandizement of this nation must be dated from a later era, and ascribed to other causes than the Norman conquest.

* This opinion, advanced by Rapin, vol. 1. has been too inconsiderately re-echoed by succeeding historians.

MANNERS, &c.

OF

THE ANGLO-SAXONS.

AFTER tracing the history of the Anglo-Saxons from their arrival and establishment in this island to the extinction of their monarchy, it may not be amiss to exhibit a sketch of their political and social system, of their commerce, their arts, and their literature. These matters, indeed, are involved in no small degree of obscurity; but by a careful attention to historical facts, the outlines of the picture may be delineated with tolerable accuracy.

The first *cynings* of the Anglo-Saxons seem to have been their war kings, who, in consequence of their long contest with the Britons, were continued for life;* and the

* It is extremely probable that the Saxon chiefs, who first invaded this island, came with the rank of war kings, whose power was to continue only so long as hostilities existed. Vide Cæsar's Comm. Tacit. &c. But to retain a territory extorted by violence from the natives, who were perpetually struggling to regain it, could scarcely admit of any deposition of the kingly office. It seems, therefore, that the Saxon chiefs and their successors, were continued from necessity and utility till the regal dignity became an established institution.—Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 2. p. 211.

crown was not hereditary but elective. The wittena-gemotte or great council elected the king; but though this assembly often broke through the regular line of descent, and raised the collateral branches to the regal dignity, yet in the greatest number of instances, they followed the rule of hereditary succession; and in most of the kingdoms of the heptarchy, and afterwards in the monarchy, the crown was continued in the same family. But the Norman conquest terminated the power of the wittena-gemotte, and changed the crown from an elective to an hereditary succession, a change extremely auspicious to the national prosperity.

The authority of the kings appears to have been indeterminate: as martial chiefs in a scene of continual hostilities, they must at first have been nearly arbitrary, acting by no rule but their own judgment, whenever they had the power of enforcing the dictates of their will. On the contrary, the numerous chieftains of whom the king was the head, would naturally endeavour to circumscribe his authority. But various circumstances were favourable to the increase of the royal prerogative. The crown was a permanent establishment, which it was the interest of every one, except the superior nobles, to

support and aggrandize : its domains were extended by every successful war ; and its revenue and munificence were continually adding to its influence : When the zeal of the Popes had completed the conversion of the island, the regal power received great support and augmentation from the religious veneration with which the clergy surrounded it. "That the church, in its weakness, should support the crown, which was its best protector, was as natural as that it should afterwards oppose it, when its aggressions became feared."* All these circumstances, however, were of a varying nature, and in the earlier periods of the heptarchy much of the power possessed by the kings must have depended on their personal qualities. The royal revenue arose from the lands in demesne, customs, tolls, penalties, and forfeitures, which the law attached to certain crimes, and various other perquisites ; and the dignity of the king was upheld by his munificence. The union of the seven kingdoms was an event highly favourable to the royal authority, as well as to the national prosperity. As soon as this event took place, the king of England became the possessor of

* Turner's Hist. Ang. Sax. 2. p. 213.

all the prerogatives and property which the different kings of the heptarchy had enjoyed.* And it was this concentration of wealth and privileges, and its consequences, which exalted the king to that majesty and power, which, in the latter period of the Anglo-Saxon monarchy, became attached to the throne.

The wittena-gemotte was the great council of the nation, and resembled our present house of lords.† No historical or antiquarian critic has ever been able to ascertain, with precision, what descriptions of persons composed this assembly, but it is evident that it consisted chiefly of the nobility and dignified clergy.‡ And it is known that nobility alone did not entitle a person to a seat in the wittena-gemotte, and that the possession of forty hides of land was an indispensable qualification.§ They were summoned by a royal writ; and the king presided in the assembly. The concurrence of this council was necessary to the making of laws, and it

* Whether the king had the power of making peace and war without the consent of the wittena-gemotte is uncertain. *Rap.* i. p. 157.

† The Anglo-Saxons had nothing similar to our house of commons.

‡ The Latin words by which they were designated, are *optimates*, *primates*, *principes*, *proceres*, &c. all signifying nobles or chiefs. See *Ethelward*, p. 847. 3. *Gale*, 484, &c.

§ 3 *Gale*, 513.

was the supreme court of judicature in the kingdom.

Among the Anglo-Saxons, the ealdorman was the highest officer in the kingdom. He was the chief of a shire, and one of the national council. He ranked with a bishop, and possessed great authority, both civil and military, and is mentioned as leading the shire to battle against an enemy.* In the latter period of the Anglo-Saxon monarchy, the title of ealdorman was superseded by that of earl, which seems to denote the same dignity, and it is evident that both were official as well as honorary.† The gerefas were officers appointed by the executive power; and their functions seem to have been somewhat similar to those of our sheriffs.‡ The thengs, or thanes, were a species of nobility peculiar to those ancient times, and their rank was attainable by all. The requisites which constituted the dignity, are stated by the laws to have been the possession of five hides of land, a church, a kitchen, a bell-house, a judicial seat at the burgh-gate, and an appropriate office in the king's hall. It was essential to a thane that

* Wilk. Leg. Sax. p. 14, 38. Sax. Chron. p. 78.

† The earl of the Danes was the same. Turner 2. p. 233. Burton's Monasticon, p. 25.

‡ See Wilk. Leg. Sax. 12, 68, 69, 115, &c.

he should be a landed proprietor; for though a ceorl had a helm, mail, and a gold-hilted sword, yet if he had not five hides of land the laws declare that he must still remain a ceorl.* The thanes appear to have been of two descriptions, some of them being mentioned by the title of king's thanes, who seem to have constituted a superior rank. In the Domesday Book many lands are described in different counties, as "Terra Tainorum," land of the thanes. From the same book it appears that the possession of five hides of land rendered the owner liable to be called out to the wars; the thane was therefore a sort of feudal lord, holding his lands by a military tenure.

The Anglo-Saxon nobility were of two classes, the noble by birth, and the noble by office. No peculiar titles seem to have distinguished the nobly born: they were rather marked out by the name of the family which had become illustrious, like the Fabii, Cor-

* A hide, or caracute of land, was as much as could be tilled with one plough and the beasts thereto belonging, and might contain a messuage, wood, meadow, and pasture, for the support of the cattle. This measure, as the learned Selden clearly shews, varied according to the nature of the soil and the course of husbandry; but it was generally considered as containing from 100 to 120 modern acres. The hide was the Saxon, and the caracute the Norman denomination of the same measure or quantity. Under the Norman kings four caracutes made a knight's fee. The oxgang was invariably the eighth part of a hide or caracute.

nelū, &c. of the Romans. The birth that was deemed noble conferred personal honour, but no political rank or power: these were attached solely to office. There was also a nobility arising from landed property, attainable by every one, and possessing what noble birth alone did not of itself, political rank and privileges; for without being owner of five hides of land, a person, though nobly born, could not aspire to a seat in the wittenagemotte, or national council. It is mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon law, as an incentive to personal exertion, that through the gift of God, a thræl may become a thane, and a ceorl an earl, just as a singer may become a priest, and a bocere, or writer, a bishop.* Official dignities were conferred by the king, and were liable to be taken away by him for illegal conduct.†

The other classes of Anglo-Saxon society were the free and the servile: among the first were the ceorls, or possessors of land, corresponding with our yeomen; and many others without property were free. But a very large proportion of the Anglo-Saxon population was in a state of slavery. This

* Wilk. Leg. Sax. p. 112.

† Asser. Vit. Alf. p. 71.

unfortunate class of men, who were called *Theow* and *Esne*, are frequently mentioned in their ancient laws, and are exhibited in the servile condition of being another's property, without any political existence or social consideration. They were bought and sold with the land, and conveyed in the grants of it promiscuously with the cattle and other property. They were carried beyond the seas, and publicly sold at Rome, in Ireland, and other countries; long ranks of young persons of both sexes, tied together with ropes, being daily exposed to sale in these foreign markets.* Thus we find that in this land of civilization and liberty, a very great proportion of the people were eleven or twelve centuries ago in a state nearly similar to that of the mass of the negro population in Africa.†

But the benevolent doctrines of the christian religion gradually mitigated the rigours of slavery. Manumission became daily more frequent. Sometimes individuals, through motives of benevolence or piety, or in generous remembrance of past services, emancipated

* See the horrid picture drawn by Dr. Henry 4. p. 238.

† The Anglo-Saxons made no scruple of selling even their own children into slavery; and the same horrid traffic was carried on between Bristol and Ireland, as in modern times between Africa and the West Indies. See Dr. Henry *ubi supra*.

a certain number of their slaves : sometimes they were redeemed by the charitable kindness of others ; and it seems to have been an exercise of philanthropy, not uncommon in the last testaments of the dying, to give freedom to some of this pitiable class of mankind.* In one of the later laws, it was expressly enjoined that no christian or innocent man should be sold out of the land.† Thus we see how greatly christianity is conducive to the temporal as well as the eternal interests of mankind. By its beneficial influence the horrors of slavery were greatly diminished. The system, however, still continued. The mass of the Anglo-Saxon population was not sufficiently civilized to admit of perfect and general freedom ; and the slaves still continued to be numerous. In the Domesday Book, scarcely any portion of land is mentioned without some of that class.

The military force was under the command of the king while it was assembled. It was rather a militia than a regular army. From a certain quantity of land a fixed number of soldiers was sent when the king summoned his people to an expedition ; and they were

* Hickee Pref. xxii. and Diss. Ep. 12. Wanley Catal. p. 152.

† Wilk. Leg. Sax. p. 107.

obliged to serve only for a limited time, which Mr. Turner supposes to have probably been two months.* It has already been observed that five hides of land was obliged to furnish one soldier;† and from these prominent features of the Anglo-Saxon government, civil and military, it is evident that they had the most essential parts of the feudal system, which appears not to have been first introduced, but only new regulated by the Normans.

Among the Anglo-Saxons, few crimes, if any, were punishable with death. The principle of pecuniary compensation pervades all their laws. Theft, adultery, personal injuries, and murder itself, were expiated by fines. The life of every man was set at a price, according to his rank in society, from the king downward to the slave. This was called his were, which was paid to the relatives of the deceased; his wite was a fine that was paid to the king. Thus any person might murder another of what rank soever, provided he was able and willing to pay his were and his wite, the legal valuation of his life. This valuation

* Turn. Hist. Ang. Sax. 2. p. 218.

† This was the general quota; but there were different regulations in different provinces, &c. See Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 2. p. 175 and 180.

exhibits a curious calculation of political arithmetic. The value or price of the king's life was 30,000 thrymsas, or £120. that of an etheling or noble 15,000, or £60. that of a bishop or earl 8000 thrymsas, or £32. The life of a thane was valued at half as much as that of a bishop or earl, and so downwards through every class of society.* In regard to personal injuries, the calculations are still more curious. Every member of the human body, and every wound that could possibly be given, had its legal valuation. All other crimes committed against individuals, or against society, had their pecuniary punishments stated by the laws. But in process of time, the imperfection of these began to be perceived, as they afforded impunity to the rich who were able to pay, and to the poor who had nothing to lose. Corporal punishments were, therefore, occasionally inflicted. Among these we find imprisonment, outlawry, banishment, slavery, whipping, branding, the pillory, amputation of limbs, mutilation of the nose, ears, and lips, plucking out the eyes, tearing off the hair, and sometimes

* Rapin, with some others, supposes that these laws related only to homicide, and thinks it absurd to apply them to murder, which he says was punished with death, l. p. 161; but of this we can find no historical proof.

hanging.* The martial law punished desertion with death. It seems, however, that treason against the state incurred only the penalty of forfeiture and banishment. Those of the Anglo-Saxons who suffered death for treason or rebellion, seem to have been punished not by the civil, but by martial law.

The Anglo-Saxons had different courts of judicature, and different modes of trial. Those by fire and water ordeal are amply described in the laws of Ina and Athelstan.† But it is evident that they had also the trial by jury. This is clearly expressed in the laws of Ina, Alfred, and other Saxon monarchs.‡ It is true the number of jurors sometimes varied; but the principle is still the same; and it can scarcely be supposed that so important a part of legislation should have been all at once brought to its present perfection. In the laws of the Anglo-Saxons, however, it is easy to trace the origin of the happy and wise institution of the English jury, which has so greatly contributed to the excellence of our national character, and the support of our constitutional liberty.

* See Wilk. Leg. Sax. 12 to 139, and Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 2. p. 269.

† Wilk. p. 27, 61.

‡ Id. 12, 47, 100, 118, &c.

After viewing through the gloom of many centuries, the political state of the Anglo-Saxons, it will not be uninteresting to inspect their domestic and social circumstances, their manners, and character. Their food, like ours, was a mixture of the animal and vegetable kind.* They raised various sorts of corn, and fed domesticated cattle for the use of their tables. For food, they had all the different animals now in use; but swine were the most abundant. They eat various kinds of fish; but the species most generally noticed was the eel, which they used as abundantly as swine. They are often mentioned in their grants. The monks of Ramsey made a yearly present of 4000 eels to those of Peterborough. "We read of two places, purchased for £21. "wherein 16,000 of these fish were caught "every year; and in one charta twenty fisher- "men are stated, who furnished, during the "same period, 60,000 eels to the monastery. "Eel dikes are often mentioned in the boun- "daries of their lands."† Among their fruits, figs, grapes, nuts, almonds, pears, and apples, are mentioned;‡ but most of these must have

* Both wheat and barley were in general use for bread; but the latter was cheapest. *Dug. Monast.* p. 296.

† *Turner's Hist. Ang. Sax.* 2. p. 45,

‡ *Inglulph.* p. 50.

come from abroad. Honey also appears to have been a favourite article of diet.* Their liquors were ale, cider, mead, wine, pigment, and morat. The pigment was a rich and odoriferous compound of honey, wine, and spices of various kinds. The morat was made of honey diluted with mulberry juice.† Feasting to excess was greatly in fashion among the rich; and although the canons were severe against drunkenness, and rigid fasts, proportioned in duration to the rank of the offender, were enjoined as a penance for that sin, the manners of society rendered all these regulations ineffectual.

The Anglo-Saxons were acquainted with both variety and vanity of dress. The ladies wore a long loose robe reaching down to the ground, with large loose sleeves; their head-dress seems to have generally been a hood or veil, which, falling down before, was wrapped round the neck and breast. They also wore necklaces, and bracelets, and rings, with gems on their fingers; and the hair, which, among the Saxon ladies, was highly valued, was arti-

* *Ad. de Laude Virg.* p. 296.

† *Henry's Hist. Eng.* 4. p. 396. They were not strangers to cinnamon, pepper, and the other productions of India. *Mag. Bib. Pat.* vol. 16.

ficially dressed and twisted.* The male sex surpassed the females in the richness of their attire, and displayed a fondness for gorgeous finery which seems inconsistent with their manly and warlike character. Their princes and nobles had garments of silk, woven with golden eagles or gold flowers, cloaks ornamented with gold and gems, chains or bracelets of gold and precious stones round their necks and arms, and rings on their fingers.† Strutt observes, that the kings and nobles, when in their state dress, were habited in a loose coat, which reached down to their ancles, and over that a long robe fastened over both shoulders on the middle of the breast with a clasp or buckle. He adds, that the edges and bottoms of their coats, as well as their robes, were often trimmed with a broad gold edging, or flowered with different colours. The soldiers and common people wore close coats, reaching only to the knee, and a short cloak over their left shoulder, which buckled on the right. The kings and nobles were habited in common in a dress similar to this, but richer and more elegant.‡ They had shoes tied with thongs,

* The *news* appear to have neglected their hair. *Ald. de Laud. Virg.* p. 307.

† *Turner Hist. Ang. Sax.* 2. p. 59 and 60, and author there quoted.

‡ *Strutt. Hord. Ang.* 1 p. 46.

and sometimes a bandage wrapped round the legs up to the calf, at other times stockings up to the knee. The Anglo-Saxons, represented in the celebrated tapestry of Bayeux, have caps or bonnets on their heads, with their beards shaven, and wearing long mustaches.* This, we are told by William of Malmesbury, was the prevailing fashion in the time of Harold II.† but the more ancient delineations in the Saxon MSS. generally represent the men with long beards, and their hair divided from the crown to the forehead, and combed down on each side in waving ringlets.

Domestic architecture and household furniture correspond with the progress of national wealth and taste. The dwelling-houses of the Anglo-Saxons were small and inconvenient, and their furniture heavy and rude. For all their elegances, and many of their conveniences and comforts, they were indebted to the introduction of christianity, which opened an intercourse with Rome, the seat and centre of all the arts, sciences, wealth, and industry of that age, the perpetual visits which both ecclesiastics and laics were in the habit of making to that city, causing a

* This tapestry exhibits a good representation of the costume.

† Gullelm. Malmsh. lib. 3. The Anglo-Saxon clergy were shaved. Wilk. p. 85.

more general diffusion of every thing necessary or suitable to civilized life. Among the furniture of the rooms in the houses of the great, we find hangings for the walls, mostly of silk, and sometimes embroidered in gold, with figures of birds. Ingulphus mentions a piece of hanging, on which was depicted, in needle work, the destruction of Troy.* The historian of the Anglo-Saxons observes, that from the unskilfulness of their carpenters, their buildings were left full of crevices, and hangings were therefore a necessity as much as a luxury, since they served to keep out the wind.† Nothing indeed can more strongly prove their utility, as well as the defective construction of the Anglo-Saxon houses, than that Alfred, to preserve his lights from the wind, even in the royal palaces, was obliged to have recourse to the invention of lanterns. Their seats appear to have been benches and stools. Their tables were sometimes very costly. We read of some that were made of silver and gold. The plate used at the tables of the great was often very rich and expensive. We read of cups, basons, and dishes, of silver and gold, and often of silver gilt, or otherwise

* Ingulph. p. 9. 53.

† Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 2. p. 67.

ornamented with gold, and candlesticks of the same materials. Glass was very rare, though Bede mentions glass vessels and lamps; but it became more common in domestic use towards the time of the Norman conquest. Gold was used to adorn their banners, as also their sword hilts, saddles, and bridles, which were sometimes ornamented with jewels.* They appear to have made frequent use of the hot-bath; but the cold-bath was held in so little estimation, that it was sometimes imposed as a penitentiary punishment.

With the pleasures of the table, the Anglo-Saxons united various diversions. The musicians, poets, harpers, and buffoons, were constant attendants at their feasts. At these convivial meetings it was the practice that all should sing in turns, and sometimes the harp was sent round.† Dancing was also a favourite amusement; and it appears from the Domesday Book that bear-baiting was not unknown. They also played at the tæil or dice. Hunting was one of their principal diversions. The beasts of chace were chiefly the stag, and sometimes the wild boar or the

* See the various references to Hiccer, Dugdale, Ingulphus, Bede, &c. ap. Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 2. p. 68, 69.

† Bede lib. 4. p. 170.

hare. The sportsmen in the train of the great were so numerous and so prejudicial to lands, that an exemption from their visits was esteemed a valuable privilege.* We hear of a king liberating certain lands from those who carry with them hawks or falcons, horses or dogs.† Edward the Confessor was extremely addicted to hunting and hawking. Every day after his morning devotions, he amused himself with those exercises.‡

From what has been said of the dress, furniture, &c. of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, it is evident that they were acquainted with the most necessary of the mechanical arts now in use. But the skill of their artificers was not exercised and refined by that competition and circulation, which results from the diffusion of wealth and freedom; their mechanics were mostly men in a servile state. The clergy, the rich and the great, had domestic servants, who were able to supply them with the articles of trade and manufacture in common use. In monasteries they had smiths, carpenters, millers, illuminators, architects, agriculturists, fishermen, &c. Similar descriptions of craftsmen were attached to the estates of the

* Turner 2. p. 77, 78, et aucter.

† Cott. M. S. Claud. c. 9. p. 104. ap. Turner's Ang. Sax. 2. p. 80.

‡ Malmsh. lib. 2. cap. 13.

great. In Dugdale we find that a nobleman gives to a monastery a manor with all its appendages, (i. e.) his overseer, and all his chattels, his smith, carpenter, miller, fisherman, all these servants, and all their goods and chattels.* Grants of a similar nature are numerous. But when the manumission of slaves gradually increased the independent part of the commonality, some of the emancipated became agriculturists, and took land of the clergy and the great, paying them an annual gafol or rent generally in kind, as money was scarce: others went to the burghs or towns, where they employed themselves in trade or in the mechanical arts, occupying houses for which they paid rent to the king as lord of the manor; and in that situation of comparative independence the exacted gafols, customs, services, &c. although sometimes expensive and troublesome, were definite and certain. Besides those who made the mechanical arts their profession, several of the monks and other clergy pursued them with assiduity, and laboured to bring them to perfection, of which the celebrated Dunstan and some others are memorable instances. It was even required by the laws that the clergy

* Dugd. Monast. i. p. 306.

should pursue these occupations, for king Edgar says, "We command that every priest, "in order to increase knowledge, shall learn "some handicraft."* The ladies were accustomed to spinning: even princesses were taught to use both the needle and distaff;† and a Norman historian observes that the Anglo-Saxon females excelled in embroidery.‡ But in contemplating the magnificence sometimes displayed by the Anglo-Saxons in their dress, their furniture, &c. we must not imagine that we see a picture bearing any resemblance to the refined and diffused elegance of later times. Commerce had not yet introduced wealth among the people. Splendour, luxury, and even conveniency, were confined to the great, to the princes, the nobles, and dignified clergy. The inferior orders were oppressed by poverty and slavery, and we cannot suppose them to have lived in a stile anywise superior to that which we see among the lowest peasantry of Ireland.

Public markets were established in a great number of towns; but the external commerce of those times was greatly confined. The Anglo-Saxons, however, sometimes visited

* Wilk. Leg. Sax. p. 83.

† Malmsh. lib. 2. cap. 5. p. 47.

‡ Du Chesne p. 211.

foreign countries for the purposes of traffic; and merchants obtained peculiar privileges. By a law of king Athelstan, enacted for the encouragement of trade, a merchant who had made three voyages in a ship of his own, acquired the rank of a thane.* It was not, however, the laws enacted by princes and national councils that could make commerce flourish: nothing but the gradual progress of civilization and liberty could produce this happy effect.

Agriculture was cultivated by the Anglo-Saxons with some attention. They ploughed chiefly with oxen, sowed their wheat in the spring, and thrashed their corn out with flails. They had common pastures attached to the portions of land which they possessed, and extensive tracts laid out in meadow. Every estate had* also an appropriate quantity of wood. In Domesday Book the ploughed land, the meadow, the pasture, and the wood, are separately mentioned, and their respective quantities estimated. In the same record we also meet frequently with parks. Their implements of husbandry nearly resembled those of the present day. They had, likewise, carts and waggons; and wind

* Wilk. Leg. Sax. p. 71.

and water-mills occur in every period of their history.* The judicious management of the monks and other clergy, greatly improved the agricultural state of the country. "Of the "Anglo-Saxon husbandry," says a judicious writer, "we may remark, that Domesday "survey gives us some indications that the "cultivation of the church lands was much "superior to that of any other order of society. "They have much less wood upon them and "less common pasture; and what they had, "appears often in smaller and more irregu- "lar pieces, while their meadow was more "abundant, and in more numerous distri- "butions.†"

It has already been observed, that the literature of the Anglo-Saxons must be dated from their conversion to christianity. And it must be allowed, that their progress was astonishingly rapid. Augustin, and the monks who accompanied him from Rome, excited a desire of knowledge among their new converts. Sigebert, king of East Anglia, established, in his dominions, a school for the instruction of youth, in imitation of those he had seen in France; and in this happy

* Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 2. p. 160.

† Turner Hist. Ang. Sax. 2. p. 167.

effort for civilization, he was assisted by bishop Fœlix, who came to him from Kent, and supplied him with teachers. About the year 668, Theodorus, a monk of Rome, but a native of Tarsus, a Grecian city, rendered illustrious by the birth of St. Paul, was, by the Pope, ordained archbishop of Canterbury. This prelate and his friend Adrian, an African by birth, but abbot of a monastery near Naples, came into England, and both being well versed in sacred and profane literature, their conversation and exhortations excited, among the Anglo-Saxons, a great emulation in literary pursuits. A crowd of pupils gathered round them, and besides the scriptures and theology, they taught the Greek and Latin languages, astronomy, arithmetic, and Latin poetry.* Egbert, who was archbishop of York A. D. 712, founded, in that city, a noble library, and greatly advanced the liberal arts. At this period, Ireland was distinguished for its religious literature; and many of the Anglo-Saxons retired thither to pursue their studies or their devotions. While some assumed the monastic life, others seeking variety of knowledge, went from one master's cell to another. The hospitable

* Bede lib. 4. cap. 1.

Irish received them as brothers, and supplied them with food, with books, and gratuitous instruction. Among the men to whom Anglo-Saxon literature was greatly indebted, Benedict, who founded the abbey at Wearmouth, ought to be mentioned with applause. He went several times from England to Rome, and brought back with him a considerable number of books of various descriptions. But though literature in the seventh and eighth centuries was striking its roots in England, yet it was almost wholly confined to the monasteries. The secular part of society was involved in gross and general ignorance. Several of the Anglo-Saxon kings could not write, but to the end of their charters and other public acts, affixed the sign of the cross, with this expression, "I have put the sign of the holy cross, '*pro ignorantia literarum*,' on account of my ignorance of writing."* Among these princes, however, some exceptions appear. There are several letters extant from some of the Anglo-Saxon sovereigns at this period, which exhibit marks of mental cultivation. Of these princes none were more distinguished than Alfrid, king of

* This was the case of several princes and noblemen throughout Europe in those dark ages. See Bish. Nicholson's Hist. Library.

Northumbria, who had retired into Ireland for the sake of study, and whose literary attainments were very considerable.*

The period of intellectual cultivation which began to dawn among the Anglo-Saxons by the introduction of christianity, was advanced to its meridian lustre by three great luminaries, Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin. In the eighth century, York was the chief seat and centre of learning in the western parts of Europe. Alcuin, who is also called Flaccus Albinus, is supposed to have been born in that city; and he himself informs us, that it was the place where he spent the years of his youth and received his education. He was the literary friend and preceptor of Charlemagne: and it may here be justly observed, that the famous university of Paris owes, in a great measure, its origin to the literary institutions at York. But the bright sunshine of Anglo-Saxon literature was obscured or rather extinguished by the invasions of the Danes, whose destructive fury involving the monasteries in the general ruin of the

* This Prince died, and was buried at Little Driffeld, in Yorkshire, A. D. 705. His death is commemorated by an inscription in the chancel of the parish church. Tradition informs us that he was mortally wounded in battle near the village of Ebberston, on the north side of the Derwent, where Sir Charles Hotham, about the year 1790, erected a monument to his memory.

country, put an end to the studies pursued in these seminaries, and occasioned that universal ignorance which Alfrid so pathetically deplored, and so assiduously laboured to remove. The exhortations, ordinances, and example, of that celebrated prince, gave a new impulse to the operations of intellect; and Anglo-Saxon literature reviving under his auspices, continued to flourish in the reigns of his successors, till it received another dreadful shock by the Danish wars which devastated the kingdom in the time of Ethelred II. but there is reason to doubt, whether at any time previous to the conquest, it had regained the lustre with which it shone during the eighth century. As learning in those ages was cultivated almost solely by ecclesiastics, their books were for the most part written in Latin. Several specimens of their Latin poetry are left us by Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin. These partake in a greater or less degree of the monkish style of versification, which was in use during so many centuries after the decline of Roman literature. Of the Anglo-Saxon poetry, as far as we can judge from the specimens that remain, rhythm, violent inversion of phrase, frequent transitions, omission of particles, contractions of phrase, and, above all, numerous metaphors,

and perpetual periphrasis, seem to have been the most prominent features.* The Anglo-Saxon language was extremely copious, and abounded in synonymes: its relics serve as a basis to the modern English. Mr. Turner has demonstrated, in a series of quotations from our most celebrated authors, how great a portion of our present language is of Saxon origin.

During the Anglo-Saxon period, the sciences and liberal arts were in a degraded state in all the western parts of Europe. The architecture of those ages was rude, and without either elegance or proportion. That the Saxons had some sort of buildings before their arrival in England, is not to be doubted. But it is also certain that their edifices were invariably of wood, and of that material they erected their first churches in this island.† The chief peculiarities of the Anglo-Saxon architecture after they began to erect structures of stone, appear to have been a "want of uniformity of parts, massy columns, semi-circular arches, and diagonal

* Turner's Hist. Ang. Sax. 2. p. 331. In the second chapter of the twelfth book of this volume of Mr. Turner's work, is a learned and copious dissertation on Anglo-Saxon poetry.

† Bede lib 3. cap. 25. Ducarel Ang. Norm. Antiq. p. 100.

mouldings.’* Of these the two first, says Mr. Turner, were common to all the barbarous architecture of Europe. But the semi-circular arches and diagonal mouldings seem to have been more peculiar additions to the Saxon building. Their knowledge of geography, though aided and improved by Alfred’s translations of the voyages of Oether and Wulfstan to the Greenland seas and the Baltic, was still confined, confused, and incorrect, their astronomy was yet more contracted; and like all other nations in those dark ages, they rendered it subservient to judicial astrology.

The Anglo-Saxons, like all other semi-barbarians, were extremely desirous of prying into futurity, and their historian has employed a whole chapter in describing their superstitions.† But this folly was not peculiar to them: it was the common foible in those times of all the nations of Europe. Superstition, the child of ignorance, is universally prevalent in semi-barbarous ages: it is gradually weakened by the progress of civilization; but, in all probability, it will never be completely extirpated. The Anglo-Saxons

* Carter’s ancient architecture ap. Turner’s Hist. Ang. Sax. 2. p. 415.

† Hist. Ang. Sax. 2. book 8. chap. 14.

had the harp and other musical instruments, of which we do not well know the construction ; and in the latter ages of their dynasty they had organs in their churches.* Benedict, the founder of the abbey of Wearmouth, introduced the art of glass-making from France. The progress of the Anglo-Saxons in the arts of design and painting was not considerable; but they were extremely fond of beautifying their MSS. with drawings of various colours, and sometimes with gilt letters. Many of their manuscripts, yet to be seen in the Cottonian library, are decorated with superb illuminations. Other particulars might be noticed ; but it would be tedious to enter into a more detailed account of manners and modes of life long ago extinct : what has been said will suffice as a general sketch of the Anglo-Saxons, before the Norman conquest put an end to their political existence.

* S. Gale. 366, and 420.

WILLIAM I.



WHATEVER advantages England might derive from the Norman conquest, in regard to her foreign politics, its effects on her internal happiness were long and fatally felt. The troubles which ensued, and terminated in the complete enslavement of the nation, have by some been ascribed to the tyranny of the Normans, by others to the refractory spirit of the English; and it appears extremely probable that both these causes concurred to produce their calamitous consequences.* A visit which William took into Normandy, afforded to the English the first opportunity of revolt. His brother, Odo, bishop of Bayeux, and William Fitz-Osborn, were constituted regents during his absence; and their oppressive government is said to have provoked the English to take arms. Two attempts, one in Kent, the other in Herefordshire, were made to shake off the Norman

* Compare *Ordovicus Vitalis*, and *Will. of Poict.* the former imputes the blame to the Normans; the latter wholly to the English.

yoke, but both of them proved abortive. The return of the king restored for a while the public tranquillity. But these two revolts rendered him so suspicious of his new subjects, that he began to consider them as secret enemies.

In reviewing the situation in which William was placed, and the rigours of his administration, it is requisite to consider that he had a conquering as well as a conquered nation to govern. It was necessary to cherish and reward the Normans, whose valour had opened him a way to the throne, and whose fidelity was his chief and indeed his only support. But this could only be done at the expence of the English, on whom he imposed intolerable taxes.* These oppressive measures instigated them to make another attempt to free themselves from a burden which they deemed insupportable. Exeter erected the standard of revolt, and refused to admit a Norman garrison. In the depth of winter, William marched in person to the siege of that city, which he obliged to surrender at discretion; but at the earnest entreaty of the clergy, he spared not only the lives, but the property of the inhabitants.

* Flor. Worcest. p. 635. Brompt. p. 663.

This lenity to a particular city, however, was more than counter-balanced by his severity to the whole kingdom. In order to discharge the debts in which his expensive armament had involved his finances, and to fulfil the expectations of his followers, as well as to destroy the influence of the English nobles, he confiscated the estates of all those who had espoused the party of Harold.

These rigorous measures discovered a systematic design of depressing the English, and drove them to successive revolts. Within less than two years after the conquest, Edwin, earl of Chester, and his brother, Morcar, earl of Northumberland, flew to arms, and their forces were joined by those of their nephew, Blethwin, king of Wales. William, apprehending that this revolt, if neglected, might be attended with dangerous consequences, lost no time in collecting his forces, and marching against the insurgents. In order at the same time to secure a retreat in case of necessity, and to overawe the inland provinces, he built two castles at Nottingham, which as well as Warwick castle, he garrisoned with Norman soldiers.* The two earls seeing all their measures dis-

* S. Dunelm. p. 197. Hoveden. p. 450.

concerted by the rapidity of his march, and the superiority of his force, were obliged to submit; and the king granted them their pardon, hoping to recover the affections of the English by this act of clemency.

The king, in the meanwhile, took the most active measures for preventing future revolts; and the terror which pervaded the kingdom was increased, when castles were seen building at Cambridge, Huntingdon, Lincoln, and several other places. Morcar and the other Northumbrian lords, although they had received their pardon, began to dread that the hour of vengeance was only deferred, and in order to avoid the threatening storm, they took refuge in Scotland, as did also Edgar Atheling, with his mother and sisters. The king, being every day more convinced of the disaffection of the English, increased his precautions. He took away their arms, and in order to prevent seditious meetings and conspiracies, he prohibited the use of lights in any house after eight o'clock in the evening, at which time the corfew bell was rung to warn the people to put out their fire and candle, under the penalty of a heavy fine.*

* Corfew, from *conore fen*, or coverfire. But Tindal, in his notes on Rapin, vol. 1. p. 171, doubts the truth of this story, which is now current among the modern historians.

These restraints, which seemed intolerable to the English, contributed to heighten their resentment against their oppressors; and historians assure us that there scarcely passed a day, in which the bodies of assassinated Normans were not found in the woods and on the highways, without any possibility of discovering the perpetrators of these murders. But the Northumbrians, whose vicinity to Scotland encouraged their turbulent spirit, were, of all others, the most impatient under a foreign yoke. They were for the most part of Danish descent, and they resolved to call in the Danes to their assistance. In the mean while, having collected some troops, they surprised Durham, and put the Norman governor and his garrison to the sword. Shortly after this event, the Danish fleet arrived in the mouth of the Humber.* Edgar Atheling, earl Gospatrick, and the other Northumbrian lords, who had fled into Scotland, joined the Danish general soon after he had landed his forces. The combined army of English and Danes meeting with no force to oppose them, marched directly to York. The Norman garrison having set fire to the

* The Danish fleet and army were commanded by Osbern, brother to Sweyn, king of Denmark. Rapin l. p. 171.

city, a great part of which, with the cathedral, the monastery of St. Peter, and a valuable library, was destroyed by the conflagration, retired to the castle. The Danes, however, carried that fortress by assault, and put most of the Normans, to the number of three thousand men, to the sword. Having thus made themselves masters of York, they left earl Walthof in that city with an English garrison, and hearing that the king was marching to attack them, they took an advantageous position between the Ouse and the Trent.*

The news of this invasion gave the king a considerable degree of alarm, and he judged it expedient to conciliate the affections of the English by acts of moderation and lenity. He recalled several whom he had banished, liberated others from prison, and convened several of the most eminent natives, in order to procure information concerning the ancient laws and customs of the realm.† Having taken these precautions, he began his march against the Danes, and in his way reduced Oxford, which had erected the standard of

* This is the account of Huntingd. p. 369, and also of M. Paris; but it seems more probable that they would encamp on the north or east side of the Ouse, or between that river and the Aire, rather than between the Ouse and the Trent.

† Hoveden p. 602.

revolt. On his arrival in Yorkshire, he put all to fire and sword; but as he durst not attack the Danes in their fortified post, he tried the safer method of negociation, and by liberal bribes prevailed on their general to evacuate the country. After their departure he laid siege to York. But earl Waltheof bravely defended that city for a long time, and want of provisions alone compelled him to capitulate. William, who admired his valour, not only granted him honourable terms; but gave him his niece in marriage. After the reduction of York, the king resolved to make a terrible example of the Northumbrians. Advancing northwards, he wasted the country with fire and sword in so merciless a manner, that from York to Durham not a single house was left standing. All that part of the country was rendered a scene of desolation; and not only the houses, but even the implements of husbandry being destroyed, a dreadful famine ensued, by which multitudes of the inhabitants perished, and the lands remained for the space of nine years without cultivation.*

William being fully convinced that nothing but force could induce the English to

* S. Dunelm. p. 300, &c. Brompt. p. 906.

submit peaceably to his government, resolved so completely to depress those who possessed any influence over the people, as to prevent them from ever making any considerable effort. For this purpose he suddenly removed the English nobles from all such posts as could give them any influence over their countrymen, and dispossessed them of all the baronies and fiefs of the crown. With these he liberally rewarded his followers, and their number being less than that of the English nobles, many of these foreign adventurers obtained vast possessions. Robert, the king's half brother, had the earldom of Cornwall, in which were two hundred and forty-eight manors, besides five hundred and fifty-eight which he possessed in other countries. Odo, bishop of Bayeux, was made earl palatine of Kent and justiciary of England, and possessed four hundred and thirty-nine fiefs. William Fitz-Osborn was rewarded with the whole earldom of Hereford and the Isle of Wight. William Warner had Surrey, and Walter Gifford the county of Buckingham. Hugh Lupus de Almonches, the king's sister's son, obtained the county palatine of Chester to hold in full sovereignty. Alan Fergeant Duc de Bretagne, the king's son-in-law, was put in

possession of all the estates of earl Edwint. To Roger de Montgomery the king gave Arundel, Chichester, and all Shropshire. Eudes count de Blois was put in possession of all Holderness. Ralph de Guader, a knight of Bretagne, was made earl of Norfolk and Suffolk, and lord of Norwich. Henry de Ferrariis obtained Tutbury castle, with one hundred and seventy-six lordships. William, bishop of Constance, possessed two hundred and eighty fiefs. The other French, Flemish, and Norman chiefs, who had joined in the king's expedition to England, were rewarded by estates in proportion to their rank or their services. The English clergy, also, notwithstanding the pains they had taken in disposing the nation to place William on the throne, met with no better treatment than the nobility. The king was resolved to depress every thing that was English. He subjected the church lands, as well as others, to military service, from which they had been exempt under the Saxon kings;* and almost all his troops being quartered on the monasteries, were maintained without any expence to the

* Selden Titles of Hon. p. 578.

crown. The bishops and abbots were, as might be expected, unwilling to submit to this infringement of their ancient charters and immunities; and their remonstrances furnished the king with a plausible pretext for removing them and putting foreigners in their places. The king, who, on every occasion was supported by the papal authority, sent two legates to Rome, where every thing passed according to his desire. On their return, Stigand, archbishop of Canterbury, was deposed, and Lanfranc, an Italian by birth, but abbot of a monastery at Caen, in Normandy, was raised to that see. Thomas, a canon of Bayeux, was promoted to the archbishoprick of York. Other foreigners were placed in different episcopal sees, and Norman abbots in the principal monasteries, from which the English abbots were removed.*

This general transfer of all the power and property of England to the Normans, was the most important transaction of the reign of William, and that which constitutes the grand characteristic of the memorable revolution effected by the conquest. From this period England became entirely Normanized, the laws, the language, and manners of

* For these proceedings vide Tyrrel's Hist. Eng. p. 28, &c. S. Dunelm. p. 202, &c.

Normandy, began to prevail. Instead of ealdormen and thanes, the French and Norman titles of counts, viscounts, barons, esquires, &c. were introduced. The Norman French was the only language used at Court, and among all people of rank and fashion; and every kind of means was used to render it universally prevalent throughout the kingdom.* A great number of Norman words were consequently introduced, and at length a mixed language was formed, different both from the Norman and from the English that was spoken before the conquest.†

It is not the design of this work to enter into tedious details of all the partial revolts of the English against the oppressive power of the Normans. It suffices to observe, that their last effort was made in the Isle of Ely,

* It has been said by some, that no other language than Norman French was permitted to be taught in the schools; but no authentic record of any positive prohibition of teaching English can be found. It must, however, be observed, that as all the people of fashion spoke Norman, it was almost unnecessary to teach English, as in that age few of the common people had any learning. As to the laws being wholly written in French, and all pleadings being in that language, some historians assert the fact, and others say that this regulation was confined to the Court of King's Bench and the Exchequer. Vide Tyrrell's introduction to vol. 2. Tindal's notes on Rapiu, vol. 1. p. 179.

† Dr. Robertson observes, that the Norman conquest did not completely obliterate the Saxon laws, manners, and language, as the Saxon conquest had done those of the Britons; because the English, though vanquished, were neither exterminated nor expelled, and still continued to be the most numerous part of the population. Vide Hist. of Charles V. vol. 1. note 4.

a place which the surrounding morasses rendered almost inaccessible. To this strong position the earls Edwin and Morcar, with the bishops of Durham and Hereford, and several other distinguished Englishmen, retired, as Alfred had formerly done, to a similar situation. Their success, however, was very different. They were joined by a great number of malcontents, and chose for their commander, Harewood, nephew of the abbot of Peterborough.* The king, who was not unacquainted with the military reputation of Harewood, resolved to crush, as soon as possible, this rebellion, and marched with the greatest expedition to attack his post. But the morasses proving an insurmountable barrier against his approaches, he commenced a rigorous blockade of the isle, in the hope of reducing the rebels by famine. This, however, was a more difficult task than he had, at first, apprehended. They had laid in an ample supply of provisions, and were prepared for a long defence. The king, however, effected by policy, what he found so difficult to accomplish by arms. The monks of the monastery of Ely, being zealous promoters of the revolt, he seized the manors

* Ingulphus. p. 71, &c.

which they possessed without the limits of the isle, in order to reduce them to obedience. This measure had the desired effect. Thurstan, the abbot, agreed to pay the king a thousand marks, and to put him in possession of the isle of Ely, on condition that he should restore the lands which belonged to the monastery. History does not inform us of the means which were used by the abbot to fulfil his engagement; but it is certain that his treachery obliged the malcontents to surrender at discretion. Their commander alone escaped by opening with his sword a passage through the enemy: of those who were taken, some were punished by loss of their eyes, others by the amputation of their hands; others, among whom was earl Morcar, were shut up in different prisons: the bishop of Durham was starved to death in his prison at Abington; and the monks of Ely, to whose treachery he owed his success, were obliged to pay an enormous fine.

While William was employed in reducing the malcontents in the Isle of Ely, Malcolm, king of Scotland, invaded the north of England, where he committed the most horrible ravages. Gospatric, governor of Northumberland, not having a force sufficient to meet him in the field, made an incursion

into Cumberland, where he retaliated on the Scots the cruelties committed by their countrymen in England. The king had no sooner terminated the affair of Ely, than he marched against Malcolm, who retired at his approach. William, however, followed him into Scotland; but neither of them being desirous of hazarding a battle, a peace was concluded: the boundaries of the two kingdoms were fixed; and Malcolm did homage to William, but whether for the kingdom of Scotland, or only for Cumberland, is a matter of uncertainty.

The aggrandizement of the duke of Normandy by the acquisition of the crown of England, was an event, which, from the very first, had a menacing aspect for France. Baldwin, earl of Flanders, regent of that kingdom at the time of the conquest, being the father-in-law of William, had favoured the project, which, had it not been for his influence, would undoubtedly have met with a determined opposition from that quarter. But the French monarch had no sooner attained to the age of maturity, than he was sensible of the error committed in his minority, and grew jealous of the power of a vassal, who was now become a dangerous rival. In order, therefore, to check the rising greatness of so

formidable a neighbour, Philip invaded Normandy, in the hope that such a diversion would produce a general revolt in England. But it was now too late. The strength of the English was already exhausted, and their spirits were broken. William passed over into Normandy with an army composed partly of French, and partly of English troops.* With these he recovered the province of Maine, which had revolted; and Philip seeing himself disappointed of his expectation, readily agreed to a peace.

While William was engaged in this war, he had some disputes with the see of Rome. Gregory VII. the boldest and most enterprising pontiff that ever sat in the papal chair, summoned him to do homage, pretending that England was a fief of the holy see. He also demanded the arrears of Peter pence, which had not been paid for several years. William, without hesitation, promised to pay the arrears, as well as the annual tribute; but in regard to homage, he answered that he held his kingdom only of God and his sword. And the Pope, who at that time was engaged in a difficult contest with the emperor, perceiving that William

* Huntingd. p. 369. Brompt. p. 972.

was neither to be swayed by superstitious scruples, nor awed by menaces, desisted from his pretensions.

This dispute with the Roman pontiff was not the only trouble with which William was harassed during his abode in Normandy. When he crossed the seas, he considered the English as too much depressed to make any further attempts against his authority. In this respect his calculation was just; but danger arose from the quarter in which he reposed his confidence. Several of the Norman lords, the chief of whom were Ralph de Guader, earl of Suffolk, and Roger de Breteville, earl of Hereford, formed a conspiracy to depose the king. Walthof, being heated with wine at a splendid entertainment, had been drawn into the plot; but afterwards reflecting on the favours which he had received from the king, and the dangerous consequences of a revolt, he passed over into Normandy, and by making a discovery of the whole affair, obtained pardon for his imprudent connexion with the conspirators. The revolt, however, was crushed almost in its birth by the activity of the Bishop of Bayeux, regent of the kingdom. The two earls were prevented from joining their forces, and Ralph de Guader was obliged to

make his escape into Bretagne. From thence he went to solicit the assistance of Swein II. king of Denmark; and a Danish fleet soon appeared at the mouth of the Thames. But the English had now sunk into a state of the most abject slavery; and the Danish commander finding that they had no disposition to rise against their oppressors, left the coast without landing his troops.*

William, in the meanwhile, having returned from Normandy, Edgar Atheling, weary of living an exile in Scotland, came and made his submission. He met with a gracious reception, and was allowed a pound weight of silver per day for his maintenance. But the king made a terrible example of all who had been concerned in the late rebellion. Some had their hands cut off, others had their eyes put out, and those who met with the most favourable treatment were banished the kingdom. Though the English had not joined the Norman conspirators, they were involved in their punishment. The king believed, or pretended to believe, that they had privately fomented the rebellion, and under that pretext, deprived some of their

* For an account of this rebellion, vide M. West. M. Paris, and S. Dunelm. p. 207, &c.

lives, and others of their estates. Earl Walthof, the only English nobleman who retained any considerable degree of credit and influence, was involved in the general wreck of the nation. The particular circumstances which led to his ruin, are unknown; but he seems to have fallen a victim to the intrigues of the Norman courtiers, who coveted his estates and preferments. On the 31st May, 1075, this nobleman was beheaded at Winchester, and his body was removed to Croyland abbey, to which he had been a great benefactor.* He was the last of the distinguished nobles of England, that fell victims to Norman despotism. He was regarded by the people as a martyr; and miracles were supposed to be wrought at his tomb.

The succeeding transactions of William's reign, were of much less importance than those already related. In a war with the Duc de Bretagne, of which historians have left only confused and contradictory accounts, he was obliged to raise the siege of Dol, with a very considerable loss.† He was afterwards harassed by the rebellion of his eldest son

* Vide Ingul. p. 72, &c.

† Compare P. Daniel Hist. of France. Tom. 3. p. 112, &c. with Odor. Vitalis lib. 4. and Malms. 3.

Robert, who was encouraged by the king of France. In this contest with his son, he was once in great danger of losing his life. Having fallen into an ambuscade, he was obliged to expose himself like a common soldier, and his valour was so conspicuous, that Robert assaulting him in person, dismounted him with his lance. But the prince recognising his father by his armour, alighted immediately from his horse, raised him up, and asking pardon for his rebellion, submitted entirely to his mercy. A short war with Scotland produced no important effects, except that Malcolm ravaged Northumberland in a merciless manner. The Welch were compelled to pay an annual tribute to the crown of England. About the year 1080, William built the town of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in the place where the abbey of Monkester stood; and about the same time, he laid the foundation of the Tower of London, for the purpose of overawing the citizens, and of securing a retreat in case of an insurrection.*

The king, seeing all opposition to his power at an end, turned his attention to the

* The part called the White Tower was that which was built by William.

arrangement of his revenues. To this end, he ordered a general survey of the lands, goods, and chattels, of his subjects. The number of acres contained in each estate, the taxes which it had paid under the Saxon government, as well as since the revolution, the number of horses, horned cattle, sheep, &c. kept upon it, with every other particular relative to landed and personal property, were entered in a general register, called the *Domesday Book*, which was laid up in the *Exchequer*, and may now be regarded as the most minute and authentic record to be met with in any country.* The king, knowing by this means what burdens his subjects were able to bear, regulated his imposts according to the value of their property, and the demands of his own avarice. His revenues amounted at least to 400,000 pounds, equal to three times its weight in modern money; and if we consider the rate of living to be increased in a tenfold proportion since the eleventh century, this income might be considered as equivalent to twelve millions at the present day.†

* *Domesday Book* is to this day regarded as decisive evidence in all controversies referable to it. But it is to be observed, that it does not comprise Northumberland, Cumberland, nor Westmoreland.

† *Bishop Fleetwood*, in his *Chronicon*, authorises us to believe that the rate of living has increased more than tenfold since a much later period; but these calculations involving so many particulars,

Hunting was the only diversion to which William discovered any attachment, and in order to gratify this propensity, he distinguished his reign by an act which stands almost without parallel in the annals of despotism. Thirty-six parish churches, with the houses of the inhabitants were demolished, and a tract of country above thirty miles in circuit was depopulated to make the new forest in Hampshire. But the severity of the game laws which he enacted, displayed an instance of tyranny still more atrocious. Whoever killed a deer was punished by the loss of his eyes,* a law, which though enacted by a christian monarch, would have disgraced a pagan legislator. In this, his favourite forest, where he had demolished the temples of the Deity, and violently seized the property of the people, two of his sons, and one of his grandsons,† lost their lives by extraordinary accidents; and it is no wonder that, in a superstitious age, those tragical occur-

present numerous difficulties; and the extremely disproportionate estimates of the value of land and of its produce, in several parts of the *Chronicon* are very difficult to reconcile to the natural state of things.

* Brompt. p. 981. Vide also M. Paris, and other historians.

† Richard, his second son, and William Rufus. Richard was killed by a stag in his father's life time. The grandson here mentioned was Richard, the son of Duke Robert. Vide *Malmsb. Dunelm. &c.*

rences were considered as the judgments of heaven manifested against sacrilege, injustice, and tyranny.

Although William had so completely established his despotism, it was not his fortune to die in peace. He was grown so corpulent and unwieldy, that tranquillity seemed absolutely necessary to his comfortable existence. But his son, Robert, having again been encouraged by the king of France to revolt, William, after making formidable preparations, passed over into Normandy.* Having entered the territory of Le Vexin, he ravaged the country in a dreadful manner, and took the city of Mantes, which he ordered to be set on fire and reduced to ashes. During this barbarian scene, the king in his eagerness to see the due execution of his orders, approached so near the conflagration, that the heat of the flames, combined with that of the season, threw him into a feverish disorder, which an accident soon rendered fatal. On his return to Rouen, in leaping a ditch he bruised the rim of his belly against the pommel of his saddle, and being carried on a litter to Rouen, soon perceived that his end was approaching. At

* P. Daniel Hist. de France, vol. 3.

this momentous crisis, it is not surprising that he should see his past actions in a light very different from that in which he had been accustomed to view them in the season of prosperity and triumph. It is said, that he acknowledged his unjust usurpation of the crown of England, and owned himself guilty of all the blood that had been spilt in consequence. If the English had a right to set aside the legitimate heir and elect their monarch, the charge of usurpation against William is just; but if hereditary claim be allowed, he cannot be deemed an usurper, but only a conqueror. He wrested the crown not from Edgar Atheling, the undisputed heir, but from Harold, who, according to the laws of hereditary succession, was himself an usurper. Historians, however, relate, that he would not presume to bequeath a crown, which he considered as not belonging to him, but left the disposal of it to God, intimating, however, that if he might have his wish, William, his second son, should reign over England. To Robert, his eldest son, he bequeathed Normandy; and Henry, his third son, had, for his portion, all his mother's effects, together with an annual pension. Some historians affirm, that he expressed a poignant sorrow for the

calamities which he had inflicted on the English, and as a proof of the sincerity of his contrition, liberated many that were confined in prison.* And, indeed, he appears to have incurred far greater guilt in the tyranny of his government, than in his mode of acquiring the crown. Having regulated his temporal affairs, and sent his son, William, to England, in order to secure his succession to the throne, he turned his whole attention to the concerns of his soul, and by bequeathing considerable sums for pious and charitable uses, endeavoured to bribe the justice of heaven to pardon his crimes.†

^{Sept. 9th,} He closed his bloody career in the
^{A.D. 1087.} sixty-fourth year of his age, after a reign of fifty-two years over Normandy, and twenty-one over England, during the latter of which periods, he had subjected the English to every species of oppression and tyranny.

The character of William, like that of most other celebrated princes, has been variously represented by historians; but it may be the most justly estimated by an im-

* Earl Morcar and Ulnoth, the latter of whom was brother of king Harold, were liberated on this occasion. Rapin Hist. Eng. vol. 1. p. 180.

† Vide Brompt. p. 980.

partial review of his actions. It has already been observed, that his rigorous treatment of the English nobles in transferring their estates to the Normans, might be partly excited by their frequent revolts, and partly by the necessity of rewarding those adventurers, who had followed his fortunes, and whom he regarded as his firmest support. But his severity to the people, his cruel devastations in Northumberland and other parts of the kingdom, his sanguinary laws and horrible punishments for trifling offences, admit of no such political excuse, and can only be considered as the characteristics of a barbarian. Those who extenuate his cruelty, adduce, as a proof, his treatment of Edgar Atheling, whom he received into favour and treated with a liberal kindness, although that prince was the legitimate heir to the crown, and had furnished him with several pretexts to sacrifice him to his jealousy. But his general severity would authorize a belief, that whenever he acted with lenity, it was through some political motive, with which historians are unacquainted.

In regard to his person, William, in his younger years, was well proportioned and handsome, with a majestic and commanding

countenance.* His bodily strength was such, that if we may believe the historians of the age, none but himself could bend his bow. Some have extolled his temperance and chastity; but all have acknowledged that avarice, as well as ambition, was a predominant trait of his character; and that although on solemn occasions, he displayed a considerable degree of magnificence, his expences were far from being proportionate to his greatness and wealth. In regard to his talents, he was one of the greatest politicians and warriors of his time. Equally prudent in forming, and bold in executing his designs, he always saw danger at a distance, and generally endeavoured to prevent its approach; but when that was impracticable, he faced it with dauntless intrepidity. The police of the kingdom is said to have been so well regulated during his reign, that a person might have travelled in safety, though loaded with gold.† But while he so rigorously enforced, among his subjects, the observance of the laws, he himself was regardless of the principles of justice, as well as of humanity. And although some historians have repre-

* Rapin, vol. 1. p. 181.

† M. West. p. 229.

sented him as a religious prince, it is evident that his religion consisted rather in an attachment to the exterior forms and doctrinal articles of the church, than in a compliance with its moral precepts. After devoutly humbling himself before a crucifix, he made no scruple to rise from his knees and plunder a province or a kingdom. Such, from an impartial review of his actions, appears to have been the man who effected so great a revolution in England. The successive events of the twenty-one years that he reigned, exhibits the complete establishment of despotism in this country; but we must trace its decline through a series of ages before we reach the period of its extinction, and see the glorious structure of British freedom rise upon its ruins.*

* It may be observed, that William the Conqueror first introduced the Jews into England. They had already been settled in Normandy. Stowe's Chron. p. 103.

WILLIAM II.



WILLIAM II. son of the Conqueror, arriving in England with letters from his father to Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury, that prelate, who was universally beloved both by the Normans and the English, exerted all his influence to place him on the throne. To the former he represented the necessity of adhering to the Conqueror's choice, as the surest means of preserving their possessions, and to the latter he promised that the young king would govern them in a manner very different from that of his predecessor. It was, indeed, necessary, in some degree, to conciliate both nations: the power and property of the kingdom were in the hands of the Normans; but the English were the most numerous part of the population, and might have been a terrible engine under the direction of able leaders. As it was expected that the crown would be claimed by Robert, who had on his side the right of primogeniture, it was necessary to hasten the accession of William. The endeavours of Lanfranc were

not exerted in vain. He gained most of the Norman lords to his party, and among these, Eudo, the high treasurer, rendered the most essential services. Before it was known that the Conqueror was dead, he put William in possession of the royal treasures, amounting to £60,000. in money, besides plate and jewels of much greater value.* He also secured Dover, Pevensey, Hastings, and the other fortresses on the south coast. Every thing being thus managed by Lanfranc and his adherents, William was crowned

Sept. 27th,
A.D. 1067.

without meeting with any opposition.

The new king was sensible that to the exertions and influence of Lanfranc, he owed his elevation to the throne; and for some time he suffered himself to be directed by his counsels. This prelate had ever shewn a great regard for the English, and his influence over the king inspired them with hopes of a happy change in their favour. But such is the difficult situation of princes, that when their measures are the best calculated for the good of their subjects, they are often opposed by court intrigue and conspiracy. While the confidence which William reposed in this

* Rapin vol. 1. p. 182.

able counsellor, held out the hope of a beneficent reign, and gained him the affections of the English, it excited from another quarter a formidable revolt, which, had it been more vigorously conducted, might have hurled him from his throne. His uncle Odo, bishop of Bayeux, who was lately released out of prison, irritated at seeing Lanfranc so greatly in favour, and ambitious of being placed, as he had formerly been, at the head of the administration, formed the project of deposing the king, and placing the crown on the head of Robert, to whom it belonged by the laws of hereditary succession. By representing the justice of the cause, and inveighing against the imperious disposition of the king, he gained many of the Norman lords, with whom he concerted the plan of revolt. He then communicated the affair to Robert, and informed him that nothing was wanting but his presence and a body of Norman troops, to place him on a throne unjustly usurped by his brother. The duke readily concurred in a project so favourable to his interests, and promised speedily to come over to England with an army. Every thing being thus arranged, the Norman lords erected the standard of rebellion: the bishop of Constance, with his nephew Robert de Mowbray,

earl of Northumberland, made themselves masters of Bath, Berkeley Castle, and Bristol, at the last of which places they established their magazines. Bigod, in Norfolk, and Hugh Grantmenil, in Leicestershire, seized several fortified places. Roger de Montgomery, earl of Arundel and Shrewsbury, William, bishop of Durham, Roger de Lacy, Ralph Mortimer, and all the other conspirators, fortified themselves in different cities, in expectation of the arrival of duke Robert with an army from Normandy.*

Had the activity of that prince corresponded with the zeal of the party that had declared in his favour, he might, in all probability, have acquired the crown of England. But his indolence caused him to lose so fair an opportunity. After a long delay, for which no substantial reason is assigned by historians, instead of coming himself with his whole force, he sent only part of his army, which being met by the English fleet, was defeated with a very considerable slaughter.† On this occasion the activity of the king formed a striking contrast to the indolence of the duke his brother.

* Vide Rapin, vol 1. p. 183; with Tindal's notes.

† Brompt. p. 965, Malmesbury p. 121.

Having, through the influence of Lanfranc, gained the English to his party, he prepared, without loss of time, to attack the Norman conspirators. He not only sent out a fleet to intercept their succours from Normandy, but marched with an army of English against his uncle Odo, the ringleader of the rebellion, who shut himself up in Pevensey, where he flattered himself with being able to sustain a siege till his nephew, the duke of Normandy, should come to his relief. After a siege of six, or according to some historians, of seven weeks, Pevensey was taken, and Odo was made prisoner. The king afterwards marched to Durham; and that city being soon obliged to surrender, the bishop and all his adherents were banished the kingdom. By address, or by terror, the rest of the rebels were induced to lay down their arms; and this formidable conspiracy, which had threatened William with the loss of his crown, was crushed without difficulty.

The English had assisted William in his necessity, and they expected a reward proportioned to their services. But they soon perceived that they had flattered themselves with vain hopes. While he wanted their assistance he was lavish of promises, which he forgot as soon as he saw himself settled on

the throne. He even began to oppress them by new impositions; and Lanfranc, to whom he chiefly owed his success, incurred his displeasure, by remonstrating against his ungrateful and tyrannical proceedings.

The death of Lanfranc, which happened soon after, was equally lamented by the Normans and the English, as it left William without any check to his tyranny. While that prelate was alive and in power, his presence overawed the king, and his wise counsels counteracted his vicious inclinations. But when this sage monitor no longer superintended his measures, he threw off all restraint, and gave a loose to that insatiable avarice, which, with a boundless prodigality, form so singular a mixture of seeming contrarieties in his character. Equally covetous and profuse, he amassed wealth by every means of extortion, and squandered it by every mode of dissipation. One of his measures, hitherto unexampled in England, was that of converting to his own use the vacant benefices.* Some of these he did not fill for several years, during which time he conveyed away almost every thing that was

* The king seized on the temporalities of the archiepiscopal see of Canterbury, and on those of the bishoprick of Lincoln, and several others, vacant by the death of the incumbents. Rapin, vol. 1. p. 184.

convertible into money; and at length disposed of them to the highest bidder, without any regard to capacity or merit. Such a conduct could not fail of introducing into the higher offices of the church, men of profligate principles, who did not scruple to sacrifice their consciences for ecclesiastical preferment. The people murmured, and the conscientious part of the clergy complained, but without effect. Their remonstrances were disregarded equally by the king and the Pope. The church, at that time, was rent by a schism, which imposed on the court of Rome the necessity of caution. And Urban II. to whom the English clergy preferred their complaints, was intent on executing the project which his predecessor, Gregory VII. had formed, of recovering Palestine from the infidels, and of engaging all the princes of christendom in a league for that purpose. In revolving so vast designs, his Holiness considered that the arms of the christian monarchs would be more efficacious than the prayers of the priests and monks, and as it would, at such a juncture, have been inconsistent with his views to irritate the king, all the applications of the clergy at Rome, were treated with neglect and indifference.

William could not easily forget the attempt which Robert, or rather his partisans, had made to dispossess him of the crown of England, and resolved to seek his revenge by seizing on Normandy. For this purpose he crossed the channel, and made himself master of some fortresses. The enterprise, however, ultimately failed. After an indecisive war between the brothers, a peace was concluded, and so complete a reconciliation took place, that Robert came to England with William, to assist him in repelling the Scots, who during his absence had invaded and ravaged the northern parts of the kingdom. These wars with Scotland, however, were little more than predatory expeditions and reciprocal ravages, which were not rendered memorable either by splendid military achievements, or important political consequences. But during their continuance, Robert Fitz-Hamon, gentleman of the king's bedchamber, with the assistance of his friends and vassals, conquered the province of Glamorgan, in South Wales. And William, in order to oppose a strong barrier against the inroads of the Scots, rebuilt the city of Carlisle, which had been destroyed by the Danes, and had lain during the space of two hundred years in ruins.

While William was oppressing his subjects by every mode of extortion, and every day finding pretexts for new impositions, a dangerous sickness with which he was attacked, inspired his subjects with hopes of a speedy deliverance from his tyranny. The king himself, in the expectation of death, which he considered as rapidly approaching, began to make serious reflections on his past conduct, and appeared firmly resolved to correct the mismanagements of his administration, if Divine Providence should restore him to health. The clergy represented the conversion of the temporalities of the church to secular purposes as an insuperable obstacle to his salvation, and under the dread of approaching dissolution, he promised to fill the vacant benefices. But the repentance extorted by terror is seldom sincere or lasting. William recovered, and all his good resolutions vanished. The apprehension of death had induced him to appoint Anselme, abbot of Bec, in Normandy, to the archbishopric of Canterbury, and to promise the restoration of its revenues; but as soon as he found himself out of danger, he began to delay, and at length absolutely refused to fulfil his engagement. This prevarication produced a contest between the king and the prelate: at length

the latter went to Rome, but finding himself unable to engage the Pope in his quarrel, he retired to a monastery at Lyons; and the king retained, during the remainder of his reign, the rich temporalities of the archiepiscopal see. Nor were his proceedings, in regard to the church, the only part of his conduct that shewed his determination to continue his former practices. Extortion and rapine prevailed as much as ever in all the departments of his administration.

The reign of William, as far as England was particularly concerned, is distinguished by few important transactions; but in regard to the general affairs of Europe it constitutes a memorable era. At that period arose the religious and military enthusiasm of the croisades, which so greatly affected the state of the different nations of christendom. William, indeed, took no part in those romantic expeditions; but one of their first effects was to give him the peaceable possession of Normandy, which he had already attempted to conquer by arms. As England, however, was afterwards deeply engaged in these singular enterprises, which carried so many hundred thousands of the inhabitants of Europe to perish in Palestine, and in common with all the nations concerned,

experienced their good and their evil effects, it will not be amiss to exhibit a slight sketch of the nature and origin of a train of ideas and transactions, which make so conspicuous a figure in the history of human affairs.

If we consider the interest which is naturally excited in viewing those places that have been the residence of some distinguished person, or the scene of some celebrated transaction, it is easy to conceive that christians, from an early period, should entertain a peculiar veneration for a city which had been the theatre of the actions and sufferings of the Redeemer of Mankind. From this principle, so congenial to the mind of man, journeys to Jerusalem became frequent and fashionable: and, in an age of superstition, a pilgrimage to the sepulchre of Christ was considered as a compensation for almost every crime.

The Arabian caliphs, while they retained possession of Jerusalem, considered the constant resort of so many strangers, the greatest part of whom were persons of rank and distinction, as a source of wealth to their dominions, and prudently encouraged these religious visits. Under their enlightened and polished government the pilgrims found protection, and were treated with respect.

But the Turks, an uncivilized tribe, having made themselves masters of Syria, not only laid heavy impositions on the christians, who visited Jerusalem; but to extortion added outrage and insult. The difficulties and dangers to which the pilgrims were exposed, excited throughout Europe a general sentiment of indignation. Gregory VII. one of the ablest, as well as one of the most ambitious pontiffs that ever filled the papal chair, had formed the vast project of immortalizing his name, by marching in person at the head of the united forces of christendom, and wresting the holy land from the infidels; but his wars with the emperor Henry IV. prevented him from carrying it into execution. Urban II. had adopted the design of his predecessor; but as he did not possess the same enterprising spirit, his measures were slow and procrastinating; or perhaps the jealousies and jarring interests of the European princes, might render it difficult to form the necessary union. While the councils of Europe were thus undetermined, a sudden and singular impulse was communicated to its inhabitants. A fanatical monk, known by the name of Peter the Hermit, having returned from his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, his ardent and enthusiastic

mind formed the great design of exciting the whole power of christendom, in order to recover the holy city from the hands of the infidels. With a crucifix in his hand, he ran from province to province, exhorting the princes, the nobles, and people, to take arms against the enemies of Christ, and every where inspired that enthusiasm by which he was animated. Urban II. seized the favourable opportunity to execute the great design which had been so long in contemplation; but less bold and enterprising than Gregory VII. he did not consider it as necessary that the Father of the Faithful should command the combined armies in person. In the council of Clermont the expedition was resolved on, and the plan of operations concerted. Godfrey de Bouillon was appointed commander in chief: Hugh, brother of Philip I. king of France; Robert, duke of Normandy; Raymond, count de Thoulouse; Stephen, count de Boulogne;* Bohemond, prince of Tarentum, and many others of illustrious rank, embarked in the enterprise. Persons of every description took the cross with enthusiastic ardour: the nobles, with their martial followers, ecclesiastics of every

* Father of Stephen, afterwards king of England.

order, and desperadoes from different countries, were eager to engage in an expedition which promised abundance of plunder, and was regarded as a propitiation for crimes. But in order to raise the sums necessary for their equipment, many persons of high rank were obliged to sell or mortgage their possessions in Europe, while they relied on their swords for obtaining establishments in Asia. Among these, Robert, duke of Normandy, mortgaged his duchy for ten thousand marks to the king of England, and the two brothers concluded a treaty, which stipulated that the survivor should inherit the whole of their father's dominions.

William got, in this easy manner, possession of Normandy; but the sum paid to Robert increased the burthens of the people of England, and his new acquisition involved him in a war with France. This contest, however, was of short duration, and produced no events of importance. Another war with Scotland was of a similar description. From this time, indeed, the reign of William was not distinguished by any thing worthy of historical notice; but it was drawing towards its termination. While hunting in the new forest, he was slain by Walter Tyrrel, a French knight, who in shooting

had aimed at a stag.* The king was pierced to the heart by the arrow and instantly expired, in the forty-fourth year of his age, and the thirteenth of a tyrannical reign.

Aug. 2d,
A.D. 1100.

William II. was of a middle stature and corpulent: his hair was of a deep yellow, inclining to red, from which and from his ruddy complexion, he received the surname of Rufus. His countenance was severe, and his voice was strong; but he was far from being eloquent. Courage and activity were the only good qualities that appear in his character. His avarice, extortion, and extravagant expenditure, were his principal vices. His government was not less despotic than that of his father. New taxes were daily invented under various pretences. Corruption was universal: those who fingered the public money were enriched, while the rest of the nation was impoverished: informers were encouraged; and to be a favourite at court, it was requisite to discard every principle of honour and conscience. During his reign, every kind of vice and excess prevailed not only among the nobility, but also among the clergy. Such are the colours in which

* This circumstance is related by all historians with little variation. See Tindal's notes on Rapin l. p. 188.

the picture of William II. and of England, under his government, is usually exhibited. But it must be considered, that the ecclesiastics were the only historians of the times, and the freedom which he took with the revenues of the church, might excite them to blacken his character. His vices may, therefore, be displayed with some exaggeration; but from the most impartial review of his reign, it appears that he lived unbeloved and died unlamented.*

* Vide M. Paris, Oder. Vital. Brompt. W. Malmesbury, S. Dunelm. Sax. Ann. &c. William II. reduced South Wales about A. D. 1093. He also built or more probably rebuilt and enlarged Westminster Hall; and raised a new wall round the Tower of London.

HENRY I.



AT the time when William II. met with his tragical death, his elder brother, the duke of Normandy, was fighting under the banners of the cross in Palestine. Devotion and avarice had compelled near a million of christians to ramble from Europe to Asia in quest of salvation and plunder. Of this number, near three hundred thousand, conducted by Peter the Hermit, miserably perished by the way. The ravages which they committed in their disorderly march, excited the inhabitants of the countries through which they passed, to take arms against this undisciplined horde. Most of them were cut off by famine and the sword in traversing Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria; and the small band that reached Asia, was almost exterminated by the Sultan of Iconium. The grand army of the croisaders was more successful. From Constantinople, the general rendezvous where their mustered legions amounted to the enormous number of seven hundred thousand infantry and

cavalry, they crossed the Bosphorus, and although multitudes of them fell victims to diseases, caused by fatigue and intemperance, in conjunction with change of climate, the rest, animated by religion and military enthusiasm, reduced the best part of Asia Minor; and proceeding to Antioch, made themselves masters of that city, the sovereignty of which was conferred on Bohemond, prince of Tarentum. Pressing forward with an ardour that enabled them to surmount every obstacle, they reached, at length, the grand object of their armament. After a murderous siege of five weeks, Jerusalem was taken by assault on Good Friday, A. D. 1099. An incredible number of Mahommedans fell in the assault and in the massacre that ensued, as the croisaders shewed no mercy. The holy city and its dependencies were erected into a christian kingdom; and it has been said, although with little appearance of truth, that the sovereignty was offered to Robert, duke of Normandy. It is certain that the report was prevalent in England; but the best historians consider it only as a vague rumour. Godfrey de Bouillon, was, by the unanimous voices of the croisaders, elected king of Jerusalem. But if the duke of Normandy rejected so splendid a station,

his expectation of the crown of England can alone be assigned as the reason.*

The conquest of Jerusalem had been achieved more than a year before the death of William II. but Robert was still in Palestine, and his absence caused him to lose the crown of England. The throne was become suddenly vacant; and although it belonged to the duke of Normandy by hereditary right, that prince was in a distant region, and whether he was living or dead, was a matter entirely unknown. Henry, his younger brother, therefore, taking advantage of so favourable a juncture, resolved to seize the sceptre. His pretensions were strengthened by his presence; and by a positive promise made to the nation to abrogate the rigorous laws enacted since the conquest, to re-establish those of the Saxon kings, to reinstate the clergy in their privileges, to fill the vacant benefices, and recall the banished ecclesiastics. The lords hesitated; but the voice of the people, that voice which, even under governments the most despotic, will sometimes make itself heard, was decidedly in favour of Henry. His name resounded in loud acclamations; and the great barons,

* Vide Rapin, vol. 1. p. 188 and 194, and Tindal's notes *ibid*.

overawed by this unanimous expression of the national will, resolved to place him on the throne. Henry, without loss of time, departed from Winchester, where the assembly was held, and on his arrival in London, ^{Aug. 5th,} _{1100.} was immediately crowned by the bishop of that city, and the archbishop of York. Such was the dispatch used on this occasion, that only three days elapsed from the death of William to the coronation of Henry.

Every competition for sovereignty is favourable to the liberties of the people, whose weight in the scale must, on such occasions, be sensibly felt. William II. left the government entirely despotic; but Henry owed his crown to an irregular kind of popular election, and on the affections of his subjects he was to depend for support. His first care was to fulfil his promises both to the clergy and the laity. He recalled from exile, Anselme, archbishop of Canterbury, whose opposition to the arbitrary measures of the late king had gained the love and esteem of the English; and having granted a general pardon for all crimes committed before his accession, and remitted all debts and arrears due to the crown, he re-established the Saxon laws as they had existed in the reign of

Edward the Confessor. These measures were not less agreeable to the Normans than to the native English. By the Saxon laws they were screened from the violence of arbitrary power, and acquired a constitutional right to those possessions which they had hitherto held at the will of the sovereign, the limits of whose authority, were now, for the first time since the conquest, expressly defined.

Although the Normans were the ruling nation, the English still constituted the great mass of the people ; and Henry, in order more fully to conciliate their affections, espoused Matilda, the daughter of Malcolm, king of Scotland, by Margaret, sister of Edgar Atheling. This alliance was extremely grateful to the English, and eventually restored the ancient race of their kings by uniting the Saxon with the Norman line of succession.

While these things were transacting in England, Robert returned from the holy land, and took possession of Normandy without opposition. Although that duchy had been mortgaged to the late king, Henry judged it imprudent to begin a contest with his brother, at a moment when it was necessary to employ all his thoughts in securing the throne of England. But Robert, seeing

himself a second time deprived of a kingdom which he justly considered as his birthright, resolved to attempt its recovery. Several of the discontented lords encouraged his design ; and part of the fleet which Henry had prepared in order to intercept him, declared in his favour. This defection of the fleet having facilitated his passage, Robert landed at Portsmouth without opposition ; and numbers of malecontents repaired daily to his standard. The throne of Henry now seemed to totter ; but the influence of archbishop Anselme greatly contributed to secure the assistance of the English. A treaty, however, was concluded between the two rival brothers. Henry retained the crown of England, and agreed to leave Robert in possession of Normandy, as also to pay him the sum of three thousand marks as an annual pension.

Every thing now seemed to indicate a sincere reconciliation. But Henry, not contented with the crown of England, was desirous of annexing Normandy to his dominions ; and it was not long before the misconduct of Robert afforded him both a plausible pretext and a fair opportunity. Robert de Belesme, earl of Shrewsbury, and William de Mortagne, earl of Cornwall,

two rebellious lords whom Henry had dispossessed of their estates, had retired to Normandy, and being joined by other malecontents, ravaged the lands which the king's subjects possessed in that country. The indolence of the duke, who neglected to oppose these outrages, rendered the freebooters still more presumptuous and daring; and complaints were brought from every quarter, soliciting protection against their depredations. Robert at length took arms against them, but was defeated, and obliged to conclude a dishonourable peace. The two lords, however, soon violated the treaty. They renewed and extended their ravages in such a manner, that all Normandy exhibited a scene of violence and outrage; and the principal nobles, seeing themselves without hope of protection from the duke, resolved to invite the king of England to their assistance. Their suit was extremely pleasing to Henry, who immediately made preparations for a voyage to Normandy, and oppressed his own subjects by exorbitant taxes for the support of a war in which they had no proper concern. The pretence of compassion for the oppressed served as a cloak for his ambition, the people being generally too blind to see the injustice of statesmen and

conquerors, when veiled by the specious appearance either of patriotism or philanthropy.

Henry, on his arrival in Normandy, found every thing agreeable to his wishes. Many of the Norman lords conjured him to assume the government, and to relieve them from the anarchy under which their country groaned. The king did not fail to express an extreme concern at being obliged to dispossess his brother of his dominions; but since the necessity of the case required so decisive a measure, he promised the Normans a compliance with their entreaties. But apprehending that such a conduct to his brother might excite some disturbance in England, he returned, in order to reconcile the nation to his project. Having convened the great council of the barons at London, he endeavoured, in a studied and eloquent oration, to demonstrate the justice of the undertaking, and concluded by declaring that if he was sure of their affection, he despised all the efforts of his enemies. This speech had the desired effect: the lords considered themselves highly honoured by this expression of his confidence in their valour, and promised to support his cause with their lives and fortunes.

Henry having obtained an assurance of support, with a grant of fresh supplies, passed over with a numerous fleet, and the principal nobility of his realm, to effect the conquest of Normandy. The battle of

A. D. 1106. Tinchebray decided the fate of that

duchy. The two armies were nearly equal; but the Normans were soon thrown into confusion, and defeated with a terrible slaughter. The duke, with Edgar Atheling, who had long resided at his court, the earl of Mortagne, four hundred knights, and ten thousand soldiers, were taken prisoners. Prince Edgar was set at liberty, and passed the remainder of his days in England.* The earl of Mortagne was sent to the Tower of London. And the unfortunate duke was shut up in Cardiffe castle, where he remained prisoner during the rest of his life.

The battle of Tinchebray having put Henry in possession of Normandy, as that of Hastings had forty years before, made his father

* This Saxon prince had long been the sport of fortune. At the conquest he had fled to Scotland. After making an unsuccessful attempt to recover the crown of England, he submitted to William, who allowed him a liberal maintenance. He afterwards went to Constantinople: from thence he returned to England. He was then banished both from England and Normandy, and again retired into Scotland. He again obtained leave to return to England, and went with Robert to Normandy. After all his vicissitudes he died in extreme old age and in peace.

master of England, he returned in triumph to London, and for some time devoted his cares to the reform of the numerous abuses that prevailed in the court and the kingdom. These were of such a nature as strikingly displayed the tyranny of the government, and the barbarity of the times. In the preceding reign, when the king took a journey, his progress was marked by all the disorders and violences that might have been expected from the march of an enemy. The numerous attendants of the court plundered and wasted the country, violated the chastity of women, and committed every kind of outrage without restraint or control, so that wherever the king was to pass, the people left their habitations, and carrying off their provisions and portable effects, retired to the woods or other by-places, as if they had fled from a foreign invader.* In comparing those ages of oppression and tyranny, with the polished manners of modern times, and the benevolent equity of the present constitution and government of this kingdom, the contrast must make, on every mind, a lively and lasting impression. Another circumstance also strikingly shews the disorders

* Rapin with Tindal's notes, vol. I. p. 194.

which prevailed through the want of internal regulation. The fabrication of counterfeit money was reduced to a system; and the coiners being protected by the great barons, were employed in their houses, where they set the laws at defiance. These abuses obliged Henry to adopt the most rigorous measures. He enacted a most severe law, subjecting the attendants of the court, who committed any outrage on the people, as well as the coiners of false money, to the loss of eyes or the amputation of limbs. If the offences demonstrate the disorders of the state, the penalties are characteristics of the barbarism of the age.

The possession of Normandy was attended by its unavoidable consequences, a series of wars with France. These, however, were not productive of any important consequences, although they afforded the king an opportunity of acquiring martial fame. In a skirmish he was attacked by a French cavalier, and though wounded, he maintained the single combat till he unhorsed his antagonist, and made him prisoner. A peace was at length concluded; but the moment that seemed to promise the king an uninterrupted felicity, ushered in a misfortune that embittered the remainder of his days. In

returning from Normandy to England, the vessel which carried William, his only son, a promising youth of sixteen, to whom the states of both countries had already sworn fealty as his successor, was wrecked in the passage. The young prince, through a childish desire of being the first on shore, promised the seamen a reward if they could pass the rest of the fleet. This foolish emulation was productive of fatal consequences. The ship, in approaching the English coast, ran upon a rock and was dashed in pieces. The first care of the seamen was to hoist out the boat in order to save the prince ; and he was already out of danger, when the cries of his natural sister, Matilda, induced him to row back and bring her off from the wreck. But the approach of the boat giving others an opportunity of attempting to save their lives, so many jumped in, that it instantly went to the bottom. The prince, with Richard, his natural brother, Matilda, countess of Perche, his sister, Lucia, the king's niece, the earl of Chester, and all the young nobility, with the officers and seamen, about three hundred persons in all, perished in the waves, and one man only escaped. This catastrophe made, on the mind of Henry, an

A. D. 1120.

impression that neither time nor the splendours of royalty could ever efface; and from that fatal moment he was never seen to smile.

The remainder of his reign, which was protracted almost fifteen years after this period, seems a blank in history. Seeing no hopes of having any legitimate male issue, although he had several natural sons, he resolved to leave his crown to his daughter Matilda, who had been married to the emperor, Henry IV. but was now left a widow; and in conformity to his desire, all the vassals of the crown, in a general assembly, recognized her as his successor. He afterwards married her to Geoffrey Plantagenet, earl of Anjou, by whom she had a son, the famous Henry II. On this occasion, the barons were again assembled, and the oath of fealty being renewed, the new-born infant was included in the disposal of the succession. Thus Henry, although he had lost his only male heir, lived to see the revival of his hopes of transmitting the crown to his posterity.

His reign was now drawing towards its termination; but previous to its close, his brother Robert, formerly duke of Normandy, expired in Cardiffe castle, where he had been kept twenty-six years a prisoner. This

unfortunate son of William the Conqueror seems to have been born to be the sport of fortune, or rather the victim of his own indiscretion. He was a prince of great courage, and, for some time, of great reputation. The most remarkable traits in his character were an easy good nature, and a boundless generosity. His profusion and thoughtless imprudence caused him twice to lose the opportunity of ascending the throne of England, which was his indisputable birth-right. After spending his youth amidst toils and fatigue, he saw himself at last deprived of his fortune, his friends, and his freedom, and condemned to languish the remainder of his days in hopeless captivity.*

The exit of this unfortunate prince was soon followed by that of the king, his brother, whose death is ascribed, though with no great degree of probability, to a surfeit occasioned by eating too great a quantity of lampreys. Henry expired at the
Dec. 1st, castle of Lyon, near Rouen, in
A.D. 1135. Normandy, in the sixty-eighth
year of his age, and the thirty-sixth of his
reign.

* The popular story of Robert being deprived of sight by the king's command, is without foundation, not being mentioned by the best historians.

Henry I. was handsome and elegant in his person: his countenance was open, sweet, and serene, and his carriage and conversation engaging and affable. His character displays a conspicuous mixture of virtues and vices. He was courageous in war, prudent in government, and strict in the administration of justice. Although living in an age of ignorance, he was learned and studious, and from his literary accomplishments he derived the surname of Beauclerc. He patronised letters, and built a palace near Oxford, to which he often retired to enjoy the conversation of the learned. But these brilliant qualities were counterbalanced by others which redounded less to his honour. He was avaricious and unfeeling; and although temperate in eating and drinking, he was a voluptuary in his amours.*

His reign is an important æra in the history of this kingdom, as it opened the first dawn of liberty, by delivering the barons from the arbitrary power which had been exercised by the two first Norman kings; but it does not appear to have given any

* Besides Matilda, his only legitimate daughter, Henry left twelve natural children, besides Richard who was drowned with prince William. Of these Robert, earl of Gloucester, was the most conspicuous in the following reign. Vide Rapin, vol 1.

freedom to the people; and the lower classes remained for some centuries in the most abject slavery. In proportion as the royal authority was diminished, the baronial powers were extended, and the people, instead of being subject to one mighty tyrant, saw petty despots established in every corner of the kingdom. The church acquired an increase of power in this reign. After a dispute of several years, the king resigned to the Roman pontiff the right of investiture. And a synod being convened, the celibacy of the clergy was enforced through the influence of Anselme, archbishop of Canterbury; but the king took little concern in this question, which he considered as foreign to his interests.* During this reign, therefore, we see the baronial and ecclesiastical powers rising in opposition to the authority of the crown; and it was not long before their preponderancy produced the most terrible consequences.

* In this reign, about A. D. 1110, the university of Cambridge was instituted, or perhaps only restored. Vide Rapin and Peter Blesens, p. 114, &c.

STEPHEN.



HENRY was no sooner dead, than the barons and clergy violated the oath by which they had repeatedly engaged to secure the succession to Matilda and her infant son. Stephen, earl of Boulogne, nephew of the late king, although he had been one of the first to swear fealty, prepared to seize the throne. His brother, the bishop of Winchester, had the address to bring over to his party the archbishop of York and the bishop of Salisbury, who, though originally a parish priest in Normandy, was become the richest subject in England.* The influence of these three powerful prelates secured him the suffrages of the clergy; and the example and authority of that body determined the barons. In the meanwhile, Stephen, who had been with the king when he expired in Normandy, was sensible of the expediency of supporting his pretensions by his presence, and lost not a moment in returning to England. Various devices were framed, to prove that the oath which they

* Rapin, vol. 1. p. 200.

had taken to place Matilda on the throne was not binding: and that the spiritual and temporal lords ought to proceed to a free election in the race of William the Conqueror. Stephen, at the same time, endeavoured to compensate the defect in his title by liberal promises of grants and privileges. The barons considered this juncture as too favourable to be let slip without turning it to their advantage. They proposed the conditions under which he should reign, and he readily granted them all that they required. He acknowledged that he was elected king by the nobles and clergy: he confirmed all the privileges and immunities of the church, and consented that all ecclesiastical causes and persons should be tried by the clergy: he promised not to meddle, in any manner, with the temporalities of vacant bishoprics or abbeys: he abolished all the laws relating to forests and hunting enacted since the conquest: he totally abolished Dane gelt,* confirmed the ancient Saxon laws, and promised to grant an authentic charter for the security of the liberties of the nation, and of the privileges of the church.† The spiritual

* The tax paid to the Danes by Ethelred II. and continued by the succeeding kings to fill their own coffers when the Danes no longer harassed the kingdom.

† Rapin, vol. 1. p. 201.

and temporal lords swore allegiance to him no longer than he should perform all the articles of this covenant. On these conditions, they placed on the head of Stephen Dec. 22, or 26,
A. D. 1135. the crown which they had repeatedly sworn to preserve for Matilda, and in an assembly convened at Oxford, he signed the promised charter.

The former order of things was now entirely changed: the arbitrary power established by the Conqueror was abolished; but a power more hostile to national happiness rose on its ruins. England now assumed the aspect of an aristocracy, in which the nobles and ecclesiastics possessed the chief command. They erected castles, which they fortified and garrisoned with their own troops, and in which they could set the royal authority at defiance. In a short time more than a thousand of these castles were seen in different part of the kingdom.

Stephen had soon cause to repent of having made no opposition to the erection of these fortresses. Baldwin de Redvers, earl of Devonshire, publicly declaring that he would no longer obey the king, erected the standard of independence in his fortified castle at Exeter, and assumed the sovereignty of that city. But Stephen, after a siege of considerable

length, made himself master of the place, and the rebellious earl was expelled from the kingdom. At the same time he was engaged in a war with the Welsh, who defeated the English troops with great slaughter, and after pillaging an extensive tract of country, returned into Wales with a considerable booty.

While the English arms were employed in Wales, David, king of Scotland, under pretence of avenging the wrongs of Matilda, his niece, made an incursion into England, and after taking Carlisle and Newcastle, advanced to Durham. This war was concluded by a treaty of peace, by which Carlisle was ceded to Scotland. The king being soon after seized with a lethargy, which induced a belief that his death was at hand, his brother, the earl of Blois, attempted to make himself master of Normandy. Stephen, however, was no sooner restored to health, than passing over to that country, the Normans returned to their allegiance, and by making an alliance with the French monarch, he frustrated the views of his brother the earl of Blois, as well as those of the count of Anjou, husband of the empress Matilda. Affairs being settled to his satisfaction in Normandy, the king returned to England, and immediately marched against the Scots,

who, at the request of the English barons, had made another irruption into Northumberland. The king of Scotland retiring at his approach, Stephen hastily returned, and in the depth of winter laid siege to Bedford, where some of the lords had erected the standard of revolt. Having made himself master of that place, he again directed his march towards the north, in order to carry the war into Scotland, and to retaliate on that country the ravages which the Scots had committed in England. But from this expedition he was suddenly recalled by affairs of infinitely greater importance.

In raising Stephen to the throne, the prelates and barons had paid less regard to his personal merit, although that was sufficiently known, than to the establishment of their own power. They considered him as wholly indebted to them for his elevation, and expected his compliance with all their demands. Stephen, in his eagerness to obtain a crown, had promised more than it was possible to perform. All of them aimed at the same offices, honours, and privileges: to satisfy all was an impossibility; and those who fell short of their high expectations, considered themselves as not rewarded according to their merit. These dispositions

being artfully improved by Robert, earl of Gloucester, natural brother to Matilda, he resolved to make an effort to place that princess on the throne.* The barons being ready to take arms, the earl came to England, and took possession of Bristol, where he placed a strong garrison. The other lords adopted the same measures in other fortified places: the kingdom assumed the formidable aspect of a country studded with castles, on the battlements of which the standard of rebellion was displayed; and the insurrection becoming almost general, the barons openly declared for Matilda. The king of Scotland also espoused her cause, or at least having made it a pretence for recommencing hostilities, entered once more into England, and cruelly ravaged Northumberland. The archbishop of York, the king's lieutenant in the north, assembled all the forces of those parts in order to repel this invasion. The English encamped near Northallerton, where they set up a mast, on the top of which they placed a silver pix, with a consecrated host, and the banners of St. Peter and St. John of Beverley, to serve as a rallying point. The soldiers having received absolution of their

* Huntingd. p. 387. M. Paris, p. 36. Malmesbury, p. 162, &c.

sins, with a promise of heaven to such as should fall in the battle, awaited with confidence the approach of the enemy, who made a formidable attack on the English intrenchments. But the Scots, though greatly superior in numbers, were defeated with the loss of ten or twelve thousand men, and obliged to retire to their own country.*

Stephen, in the meanwhile, was not inactive. At the commencement of his reign, he had employed the treasures of the late king in levying an army of Flemings, French, and other foreigners, on whom he could depend, in case of a revolt of his own subjects; and he now found the beneficial effects of this precaution.† With these mercenary forces he carried the terror of his arms into every part of the kingdom; and the barons not daring to meet him in the field, were successively compelled to surrender their castles. The earl of Gloucester, seeing the ruin of his party, escaped into France to his sister Matilda. His flight, and that of several other lords, left the king at liberty to pursue the war against Scotland, and he immediately

* Vide Rapin, vol. 1. p. 203, with Tindal's notes.

† Malmsbury says that Stephen found £100,000. in the treasury. Rapin says 100,000 marks, besides plate and jewels. Malmsb. p. 179. Rapin 1. p. 201.

commenced his march into the north. But the Scotch monarch carefully avoided an engagement, and Stephen prudently considering that no advantages could be gained in this expedition, sufficient to counterbalance the dangers that might arise from too long an absence, was desirous of returning to his own kingdom. A treaty was therefore concluded, by which the county of Northumberland and the earldom of Huntingdon were granted to Prince Henry of Scotland; and the Scottish monarch engaged to take no further concern in the dispute between Stephen and Matilda.

England might now have enjoyed many years of lasting tranquillity, had not the king involved himself in a quarrel with the clergy, whose power was so greatly increased as to eclipse that of the crown. The prelates had a number of strong castles. The bishop of Salisbury had two of these fortresses, one at Devizes and another at Sherborn, and was building a third at Malmsbury. The bishop of Lincoln had strong castles at Newark and Sleaford; and the bishop of Ely was nothing behind them in pomp and magnificence. When these prelates came to court, they were attended by a number of armed followers, as if they intended to brave the

sovereign rather than to shew him respect. An affray which happened at Oxford between the retainers of these three bishops and the king's* attendants, put the regal and episcopal power to the trial. The king's servants were beaten: the bishops were summoned to answer for the riot of their domestics, and were required to deliver up their castles as a security for their allegiance. On their refusal, the king at the head of an armed force, reduced their castles, and seized the treasures there deposited. This exasperated the whole body of the clergy; and the bishop of Winchester, who was secretly incensed against the king his brother, because he had not admitted him into the administration of public affairs, nor advanced him to the see of Canterbury, placed himself at the head of the episcopal faction, which was joined by most of the lay barons, and the contest which ensued was attended by all the calamities that can fall upon a nation.

The kingdom being all in confusion, and swarming with malecontents who only wanted a leader, the empress, Matilda, resolved to profit by so favourable a juncture. She

* Vide Tindal's notes. Rapin's account is somewhat different, vol. 1. p. 204.

Sept. 30th,
A. D. 1139. landed at Portsmouth with only one hundred and sixty men, a very small force for the enterprise which she was meditating. But she relied on the support of the malecontents, and her expectation was not disappointed. She was soon joined by the clergy and most of the principal nobility ; and there remained with the king, only a few of the barons and his army of foreigners.

A civil war now commenced, in which the operations were so complex, and the instances of treachery, of rapine and perfidy, so numerous, that a recital of particulars would be equally tedious and disgusting. Amidst such a multiplicity of matter, and such a chaos of confusion, it suffices to mention the principal events. The bishop of Winchester soon began to repent of his error in raising a storm which must overwhelm the king, his brother, in the consequences of whose fall, he himself would, in all probability, be involved. From this consideration he resolved to change sides ; and being desirous of regaining the king's confidence by some signal service, he drew to Winchester a number of the barons who adhered to Matilda, and detained them prisoners until they surrendered their castles.

Amidst all his difficulties Stephen displayed a firmness that kept up the courage of his adherents ; and daily endeavoured to counteract, by his prudence and valour, the reverses of fortune. Matilda and her brother, the earl of Gloucester, however, escaped from Wallingford, where the king had, for some time, kept them blockaded. The earl then made himself master of Worcester, while the barons of his party ravaged the counties of Chester and Nottingham ; and Matilda retired to Lincoln, where she was immediately besieged by Stephen. During the siege, however, she found means to escape ; and the king, who hoped to have decided the contest by the capture of his rival, finding himself disappointed, retired from the city. He had scarcely begun his retreat before he was informed that the earl of Chester, with his wife and brother, were arrived at Lincoln. On receiving this intelligence, he immediately marched back, and again laid siege to the place. The earl of Gloucester coming suddenly to its relief, a decisive battle took place : The royal army being totally defeated and dispersed, the king was left alone and on foot in the midst of his enemies. In this forlorn situation, assaulted by multitudes, he resisted their

efforts with astonishing valour. But having broken first his battle-axe and then his sword in this terrible encounter, he was knocked down to the ground and made prisoner. The unfortunate monarch being now in the power of his enemies, was committed to the castle of Bristol and loaded with irons.*

While Stephen was in this deplorable condition, Matilda improved, by her arts and address, the advantages gained by her arms. The whole kingdom, except London and the county of Kent, abandoned the captive monarch. Normandy followed the example of England; and the king of Scotland again entered the northern provinces, in direct violation of the late treaty. At this horrid period, honour and honesty seemed to have vanished, and perfidy alone was considered as good policy.

Although the battle of Lincoln had rendered Matilda irresistible in arms, some difficulties were yet to be overcome before she could establish herself on the throne. It was necessary to gain the bishop of Winchester, who, in quality of legate, was at the head of the clergy; and also to obtain possession of the city of London. On condition of having

* Vide *Malsbury* p. 187.

the disposal of all ecclesiastical preferments, the bishop abandoned the cause of the king, his brother, and in the cathedral church of Winchester, pronounced the sentence of excommunication against all his adherents. He then called a synod of all the prelates and abbots, and at his instigation Matilda was unanimously elected queen of England.

Nothing was wanting but the consent of the Londoners to her coronation. The city was, at that juncture, all in confusion: the barons who adhered to the king, had retired to London, and united in a confederacy with the citizens; but at length it was resolved to give way to the times, and acknowledge the empress. She was received in London with great magnificence by the barons and citizens, and the whole kingdom following the example of the metropolis, Matilda was every where recognised as sovereign.

The king, in the mean while, languished in prison, loaded with fetters, and although he offered to resign all claims to the crown, to retire out of the kingdom, and never to return, neither the tears of his queen, nor the solicitations of his friends, could induce Matilda to release him from captivity. Such, indeed, was the character of the times, that no one could trust to treaties, promises, or

oaths, after so many instances of their violation. But the incessant fluctuations of the state gave a favourable change to his fortune; and his rival in her turn experienced the instability of a throne.

In placing the crown on the head of Matilda, the shadow of royalty was all that the bishops and barons intended to give; but with this she was not contented. Conscious of her hereditary right, she expected to revive the absolute power of her Norman predecessors, without considering the altered complexion of the times. The views of the sovereign and her subjects, therefore, verged towards two opposite extremes: she expected to reign with the authority of a despot: they intended that she should be only a pageant of state. The just medium of a limited government, so beneficial both to the sovereign and the subject, was scarcely thought of in those times of violence and anarchy. The bishop of Winchester, who was all-powerful in the church, expected that, in consideration of his services, the new queen would be wholly guided by his counsels. On finding himself disappointed, he resolved to convince her that, as he had so greatly contributed to place the sceptre in her hand, he could wrest it from her with equal facility.

The Londoners being disgusted at her haughty demeanor, the bishop fomented their discontents, and a confederacy was formed for the purpose of seizing her person. Matilda, however, having had timely notice of the design, escaped the danger by a precipitate flight. The bishop immediately levied an army, and ordered the castle of Winchester, and some others that were at his disposal, to be well stored with provisions and arms, while Matilda put herself at the head of her forces, and was joined by her brother, the earl of Gloucester, and by the king of Scotland.

The civil war now recommenced with all its horrors. The Kentish men and the Londoners, commanded by Eustace, the king's son, and William de Ypres, general of the foreign mercenaries, marched against Matilda, who had taken possession of Winchester; and while they besieged her in the castle, the bishop set fire to the city, the greatest part of which was consumed, and an abbey and a nunnery, with above twenty churches, were destroyed by the conflagration.*

The siege having continued two months, and the castle being no longer tenable, the

* Malmbury, p. 190.

besieged took the bold resolution of opening, with their swords, a passage through the enemy. They sallied out in good order, Matilda and the king of Scotland marching in the front, and the earl of Gloucester bringing up the rear. The king's troops harassed their march by incessant attacks, and in passing through a narrow defile, the earl of Gloucester, after giving signal proofs of his valour, was made prisoner. The queen, with a few of her followers, escaped to Devizes, and from thence to Gloucester, although the roads were lined with soldiers.

The liberation of Stephen was the consequence of this event. After the earl of Gloucester had remained six months a prisoner, he was exchanged for the king; but the war continued to rage with unabated fury. The bishop of Winchester summoned a council, at which the king was present, and having, in a rhetorical harrangue, endeavoured to justify his conduct and the frequent violation of his oaths, he concluded by excommunicating all the adherents of Matilda, as he had about a year before fulminated the same sentence against those of Stephen. Thus were the people exposed to alternate and opposite excommunications, as one party or the other prevailed. This, however, is

nothing extraordinary : in all ages and in all countries, among Pagans, Jews, Mahomedans, and Christians, religion has too often been made a political engine.

But temporal as well as spiritual arms were necessary to contend with the turbulence of the times. The earl of Gloucester passed over into Normandy to solicit the aid of the count of Anjou, the husband of Matilda, who had seized on that duchy. The count would gladly have supported the right of his wife, which was also that of his son, but the affairs of Normandy were not sufficiently settled to permit him to send any considerable force into England. He contented himself, therefore, with sending a small body of troops, accompanied by his son Henry, in the hope that his presence might have some influence on the English.

Matilda, in the mean while, had retired to Oxford, where she waited for succours from Normandy. Stephen, regarding this as a favourable opportunity of terminating the war by the capture of his rival, marched to Oxford, burned the city and laid A. D. 1142, siege to the castle.* From the 26th September till Christmas, notwithstanding

* Malmesbury, p. 194.

the rigour of the season, every possible effort was made in the attack and defence. At the last, Matilda, finding it impossible to make any longer resistance, took advantage of a dark night to make her escape. She crossed the Thames on the ice, and afterwards walked six miles on foot, facing a severe storm of snow. This was no easy task to a lady who was the daughter of a king, and had been the wife of an emperor, and who had, herself, so lately worn a crown; but dangers and difficulties, which strike the pusillanimous with terror, only serve to rouse vigorous minds to exertion.

All the efforts of Matilda and her party, however, were ineffectual. From the time that Stephen was liberated, the war continued nearly six years, a melancholy period, the history of which presents only a picture of rapine and anarchy, with confused details of skirmishes, sieges, or surprises of castles, and disgusting accounts of the pillage and destruction of towns and villages. It suffices, therefore, to say, that the party of Matilda gradually declined; and the death of the earls of Gloucester and Hereford, the two ablest supporters of her cause both in the council and the field, completed the series of her misfortunes. Finding her affairs

A. D. 1147. irretrievable, she retired into Normandy, and left Stephen in quiet possession of the throne. Since the time of the Danish invasion, England had never suffered such calamities as during this dreadful contest.

Stephen having, with the greatest difficulty, recovered the crown of England, left Matilda undisturbed in Normandy, and turned his whole attention towards repairing the mischiefs occasioned by civil commotions. One of the great objects of his care was to transmit the sceptre to his posterity ; but he soon saw it wrested from his family by a new rival. Henry, the eldest son of Matilda, having, by the death of his father, been put in possession of Anjou, his mother permitted him to assume the title of duke of Normandy ; and for his farther aggrandizement, he married Eleanor, the repudiated wife of Louis VII. king of France, with whom he received the sovereignty of Guienne, Poitou, Saintonge, and other territories. This sudden increase of power alarmed the French monarch, who incited Geoffrey, the brother of Henry, to invade Anjou, and vested Eustace, the son of Stephen, with the dukedom of Normandy. Henry, however, expelled the two claimants ; and without

being discouraged by the ill success of his mother, his enterprising genius prompted him to assert his right to the crown of England.

Having landed with a considerable number of troops, his presence gave new life to his party, which since the departure of Matilda seemed to be totally suppressed. He was soon joined by many of the barons, who put into his hands no less than thirty fortified castles, among which were those of Malmsbury, Stamford, and Nottingham. Near Wallingford, Stephen and Henry were preparing for battle, and the kingdom was again threatened with all the horrors of civil war, when the prudent counsels of the earl of Arundel averted the impending storm. His arguments, which ought to be transmitted to posterity in letters of gold, were founded on the threefold basis of patriotism, christianity, and reason. He represented to the king the miseries to which the kingdom must again be exposed by the contest: he insisted that it would be more suitable to the character of christians, to try to accommodate matters by treaty, than to revive the misfortunes of their bleeding country by renewing the war; and, in fine, he flatly declared it to be inconsistent with reason,

that a whole nation should suffer the greatest calamities on account of a dispute between two princes, whose aim was to gratify their own ambition, rather than to procure the happiness of the people.* Whether the king was moved by these remonstrances, or what is more probable, was afraid of being deserted, he consented to propose an accommodation. Henry, who was ready for battle, and desirous of military fame, would have willingly rejected the proposal; but being urged by the lords of his party, and perceiving that the English grew weary of being the dupes of ambition, and of permitting rival princes to wade through their blood to a throne, he yielded with reluctance to their importunity, and agreed to a truce, in order to commence a negotiation for peace.

The claims of Stephen and Henry, however, were not adjusted without considerable difficulty. The sudden death of Eustace, the eldest son of Stephen, which happened during the negotiations, removed one obstacle to the conclusion of the treaty. But the king had another son named William, on whom he desired to settle the succession. To this, however, Henry would never consent, and

* Rapin, vol. 1. p. 210.

Stephen was obliged to give up the point. It was therefore agreed that Stephen should wear the crown during his life, and that Henry should be recognised as his successor.

Thus ended the dreadful contest, which during so many years had drenched England with blood, and converted her fertile fields, her villages, and towns, into scenes of desolation. Stephen, although he had no longer any hope of transmitting the crown to his descendants, used all his endeavours to alleviate the miseries of the kingdom, and his measures were well adapted to their object. But while he appeared so desirous to compensate the fatal effects of his usurpation by the beneficence of his future government, he was suddenly surprised by death

Oct. 25, in the fiftieth year of his age, and
A. D. 1154. the nineteenth of his reign.

The qualities which seem to have predominated in his character, were valour, clemency, and generosity. In the field, his personal courage and martial abilities were on many occasions splendidly conspicuous, and his reign, although almost a continued series of civil wars, affords no instances of deliberate cruelty. His domineering vice was ambition, a passion which in that age was universally indulged by princes. His

accession to the throne, though sanctioned by the perjured prelates and barons, was an evident usurpation in direct violation of his oath ; and its consequences were fatal to his repose, and to the happiness of the kingdom. The miseries of his reign have been concisely described : the church and the aristocracy domineered over the throne ; the democratical part of the nation was in a state of abject slavery, and groaned under the complicated calamities of war and famine. The king, the bishops, and barons, were constantly struggling for power and privileges ; but the rights of the people were wholly disregarded. In such a state of society, it is scarcely necessary to observe that commerce and manufactures, arts, sciences, and letters, were neglected.

HENRY II.



ALTHOUGH Henry was detained in Normandy by contrary winds, and did not arrive in England till six weeks after Stephen was dead, he met with no difficulty in ascending the throne. The nation had too fatally experienced the baneful effects of civil commotions, to wish for their renewal ; and Henry Dec. 19th, 1155. was crowned a few days after his arrival. The English beheld, with great satisfaction, the accession of a prince descended by the female line from their ancient kings ; and the monarchy received a very considerable addition of splendour and strength by the annexation of Guienne, Poictiers, Saintonge, Maine, Anjou, Touraine, and Normandy, which were all in Henry's possession. The first care of the new king was to redress the evils which civil commotions had produced in England, and to deprive the factions of the power of exciting fresh troubles. For this purpose he began with demolishing the numerous castles which had been fortified during the preceding reign,

and which served as the sanctuaries of robbers, the receptacles of plunder, and the seats of licentiousness. Another of his measures, which was equally agreeable to his subjects and beneficial to the kingdom, was the dismissal of the foreign forces entertained by Stephen. England had long experienced their depredations ; but Henry having clearly indicated his intention of clearing the country of such a pest, William de Ypres, their general, disgusted by the cold reception which he met with at court, and sensible that he should not find his account amidst scenes of tranquillity, led off his mercenary bands without waiting for positive orders to depart from the kingdom.

But all the proceedings of Henry were not characterised by the same disinterested regard for the public welfare. Some of them seemed to proceed from more ignoble motives, and to be calculated on principles less equitable. He revoked all the grants made by his predecessor, and resumed all the lands alienated from the crown. Those who had adhered to Stephen, alleged that, in serving a king actually on the throne, they had acted the part of loyal subjects ; and those who had supported the cause of Matilda, which was also that of Henry himself, complained of the

injustice of depriving them of their rewards, and of confounding them with Stephen's adherents. In consequence of these resump-tions, William, the son of Stephen, was despoiled of all his estates, except such as belonged to his family before his father's accession to the throne, although the treaty which Henry had signed, gave him an incontestible right to all the rest of his possessions.* But treaties are of little force against power; and Henry's treatment of his brother, Geoffrey, count of Anjou, shews that he made no scruple of violating the most sacred obligations, when they interfered with his views of his ambitious policy.

As soon as Henry obtained the duchy of Normandy, Geoffrey took possession of Anjou according to the purport of his father's testament. He was soon driven out of that province by Henry; but when the latter ascended the throne of England, Geoffrey revived his pretensions, and was received by the Angevins as their lord. Henry had bound himself by an oath to execute the will of his father; but perjury is too often regarded as a trifling matter in political concerns.† Henry declared the testament

* Vide Rapin 1. p. 223.

† For a particular account of this affair, vide Rapin vol. 1. p. 224.

to be illegal, and being relieved from his oath by a papal dispensation, he passed over into France, and expelled his brother from Anjou, which he annexed to his other dominions.

The king having accomplished the design of his expedition, returned to England, and concluded an advantageous treaty with Malcolm IV. king of Scotland, who resigned to him Carlisle, Newcastle, and the fortress of Bamborough. These places had been ceded to David I. grandfather of Malcolm by Stephen, when pressed on every side by the efforts of rebellion; but the dread of Henry's power induced the Scottish monarch to consent to their restoration. The Welsh, however, had not imbibed the same terror. They did not hesitate to attack so formidable a neighbour; and without provocation they made an incursion into his territories. The king having collected a powerful army, marched in person to repel this invasion; and having entered Wales, put all to fire and sword. Upon his approach, the Welsh had retired into their inaccessible mountains; and the van of the English having entered into a narrow defile, was totally routed. A

A. D. 1157. rumour at the same time being spread, that the king was slain,

the whole army was thrown into so great a confusion, that it required all the courage and prudence of Henry to preserve it from total destruction. After this disaster, he resolved to prepare a fleet, in order to make descents on their coasts; and the Welsh, apprehensive of being attacked on every side, agreed to a treaty of peace, by which they granted him permission to cut roads through their forests, which would open an entrance into their country, and surrendered several castles which they had seized during the convulsed reign of king Stephen.

Within two years after the termination of this troublesome war, the death of Geoffrey, his brother, afforded to Henry an opportunity of enlarging his dominions on the continent. That prince had, after his expulsion from Anjou, obtained the earldom of Nantes; and at his decease, Henry claimed the possession by right of inheritance from his brother. But Conon, duke of Bretagne, seized on Nantes and its territory, which he annexed to his own dominions. In consequence of this procedure, Henry seized on the earldom of Richmond, which the duke of Bretagne held in England,* and soon after passed into

* It is here necessary to remember, that Alan Fergeant, the ancestor of Conon, duke of Bretagne, was one of the generals of Wil-

Normandy with a very considerable force. By the marriage of his eldest son, who was five years of age, with Margaret, the French king's daughter, an infant only six months old, he secured the neutrality of that monarch. Canon, who was unable to maintain a contest with so formidable an antagonist as the king of England, was obliged to yield up the city and earldom of Nantes. But this was not the only advantage that Henry derived from his expedition. He concluded a marriage between his son Geoffrey, who was then in his cradle, and Constance, the daughter of Canon. By this marriage, which, notwithstanding the bridegroom's youth, was celebrated five years afterwards Geoffrey became duke of Bretagne on the death of his father-in-law.

The dominions which Henry possessed in France, rendered him nearly as powerful in that kingdom as the monarch himself; and he had also the expectation of adding Bretagne to the territories of his family. But his ambition increasing with his prosperity,

Ham the Conqueror, and obtained the estates of earl Edwin, in Yorkshire, with the title of earl of Richmond. Vide d'Argentré p. 173, &c. The grant of these estates to Alan was made at the camp before York, when the Conqueror besieged that city A. D. 1070. Drake's Eboracum, p. 88.

he revived the pretensions of his queen to the extensive county of Thoulouse.* The nature of these claims are wholly uninteresting; and it suffices briefly to relate the event. His recent alliance with the French monarch, induced him to suppose that he should meet with no greater opposition in Languedoc than he had done in Bretagne. This expectation, however, was ill-founded. Louis, alarmed at the exorbitant aggrandizement of his vassal, threw himself into Thoulouse with so considerable a force, that Henry, having approached the city, soon found himself obliged to retire. In his retreat he ravaged Le Beauvoisis; and Simon, count of Montfort, having delivered to him his castles in the vicinity of Paris, the communication between that city and Orleans was entirely cut off. These circumstances obliged Louis to propose a cessation of arms, and a truce was concluded which terminated in a peace.

After a stay of four years in France, A. D. 1163. Henry returned to England. At this period his affairs were in so prosperous a state, both abroad and at home, as to promise him a reign equally glorious and tranquil.

* For a statement of these pretensions, vide Rapin l. p. 225.

But his sunshine of happiness was soon overclouded by storms that were gathering in the horizon. Although beloved by the nation, respected by his neighbours, and feared by his enemies, the ambition of one of his subjects imbibited a considerable part of his reign, and reduced him to a state of humiliation that would astonish any person who is unacquainted with the ideas and spirit of that age.

Thomas Becket was the son of an eminent citizen of London, by a Syrian woman. His youth had been employed in the study of the law, in which he acquired great reputation.

Having, in the beginning of this reign, had some business to transact at court, he became known to the king, who conceived such an opinion of his merit, that he conferred on him the dignity of high chancellor. In the discharge of this eminent office, Becket displayed an insupportable haughtiness, and an extraordinary magnificence. The bridles of his horses had silver bits; and he surpassed any of the earls in his expenditure.* It is even said, that, in the war of Thoulouse, in which he attended the king, he maintained, at his own expence, seven hundred knights

* Brompton.

and twelve hundred foot soldiers.* Notwithstanding his imperious and arrogant behaviour to others, he was extremely obsequious to his royal master, and seemed entirely devoted to his will. The king was so misled by his blandishments, that he regarded him as a man always ready to sacrifice his life in his service; and imagining that he might be highly instrumental in executing a plan which he had, for some time, meditated, he procured his election to the archiepiscopal see of Canterbury. As soon as Becket was placed in that eminent station, he sent the great seal to the king; and suddenly altering his mode of living, he wore the habit of a monk, with sackcloth next his skin, and kept only a few domestics. Under this external appearance of mortification and humility, however, he concealed the most ambitious designs; and seeing himself at the head of the English church, he resolved, if possible, to exalt his own power above that of his sovereign.

It has already been observed, that, during the reign of Stephen, the power of the clergy had increased to an exorbitant height. Henry resolved to reduce it within its due bounds;

* Rapin 1. p. 226.

and as he expected from Becket a more ready compliance than from any other prelate, this had been his principal reason for exerting his influence to procure his election to the see of Canterbury. But he was extremely wrong in his conjectures. Becket no sooner saw himself at the head of the clergy, than he considered himself as bound in honour and duty to the support of their cause, and promised himself immortal fame and eternal glory by a vigorous defence of their privileges and immunities. The famous dispute between Henry and this prelate, merits particular attention, as its origin, its progress, and ultimate consequences, contribute to display the spirit and complexion of the age.

One of the greatest abuses that had crept into the church, was its remissness in regard to the punishment of priests convicted of crimes. The clergy could be tried only in the ecclesiastical courts; and the trials were conducted with such indulgence to the holy malefactors, that their most enormous crimes were punished only with degradation, and others with a short suspension or easy confinement. Such a practise evidently tended to the destruction of all morality among the clergy, who, being sure of impunity, often committed the most horrible outrages. It

was proved in the presence of the king, that, since his accession, above a hundred murders had been perpetrated by ecclesiastics, of whom not one had been punished so much as with degradation, the usual penalty imposed by the canons. Such enormous abuses could not fail of exciting the complaints of the people, and the animadversion of the sovereign.

While things were in this state, Philip de Broc, a canon of Bedford, having committed a murder, was tried in the archbishop's court, and condemned to be deprived of his benefice and confined in a monastery. The king expostulated with the archbishop for punishing so slightly a capital crime. The prelate insisted on the immunities and privileges of the clergy, and affirmed, that an ecclesiastic ought not, for any offence whatever, to be punished with death. Henry replied, that God could not take pleasure in sanctioning the crimes of his ministers, and declared, that, being appointed to administer impartial justice to all his subjects, it was his intention, since the ecclesiastical court was so favourable to the clergy, that all heinous offences, such as murder, robbery, and the like, should be brought before his own tribunals. The archbishop answered, that he would never

allow the clergy to be tried any where but in the ecclesiastical courts. The dispute was conducted with great warmth on both sides : the king and the archbishop parted extremely dissatisfied ; and the latter, instead of adopting any conciliatory measure, seized several occasions of infringing the royal prerogative.

The arrogance and obstinacy of Becket rendered the king still more sensible of the expediency of reducing the power of the clergy within its just limits. For this purpose he convened an assembly of the principal lords of the realm, spiritual as well as temporal. When they were met, he complained of the proceedings of the archbishop of Canterbury, and endeavoured to render them sensible, that, if measures were not taken to curb that haughty and enterprising prelate, he would at length usurp all the prerogatives of the crown, and all the power of the kingdom, under the pretence of supporting the privileges of the church. The majority of the barons, most of whom were offended at the arrogance of Becket, rejoiced at this opportunity of humbling his pride, and reducing the power of the clergy, who had so long eclipsed the splendour of the nobility. The king perceiving these favour-

able dispositions, brought forward certain regulations as necessary to the preservation of order and tranquillity in the kingdom. Among these was an ordinance that clergymen accused of capital offences, should be tried in the king's courts. The other articles tended to retain the clergy in their obedience to the crown; and all of them met with the unanimous approbation of the lay barons. But the bishops and abbots refused to sign them, unless this clause were added, "saving the rights and privileges of the church;" a clause which was calculated to render them wholly ineffectual. The king, exasperated at their refusal, suddenly left the assembly, after using some threats, which induced them to send a deputation to assure him that they were ready to comply with his will. Becket long opposed this resolution; but at last being pressed by the other bishops, he yielded to their importunity, and waited on the king, who was highly satisfied at this seemingly favourable conclusion of the affair; and in order to give a firmer sanction to the new regulations, resolved to have them ratified in a general assembly of all the bishops and barons of the kingdom. This assembly being shortly after convened at Clarendon, the same articles were subscribed by

all the lords, both spiritual and temporal.* Becket and his party made some objections; but at the instance of the other prelates, he at length complied, although with evident reluctance.

Henry now flattered himself that the dispute was terminated, and the harmony between the church and the state completely restored. But the Pope, who undoubtedly acted in concert with Becket, condemned the transactions of the assembly as prejudicial to the church, and destructive of her privileges. In conformity to the papal decision, the archbishop openly declared, that he repented of having subscribed the constitutions of Clarendon, and that he had committed so heinous a crime as to have no hope of pardon but from the mercy of the Pope. The king, in the mean while, finding that the archbishop, sheltering himself under the protection of the Roman see, grew daily more obstinate, endeavoured to humble his haughty spirit. An action was first brought against him for unjustly retaining a manor which did not belong to him, and the archbishop was condemned to pay a fine of five hundred pounds. He was afterwards charged with

* For a particular account of the sixteen articles of the constitution of Clarendon, vide Tyrrel, vol. 2.]

two capital crimes. The first was for converting to his own use, the revenues of the archbishopric of York, of which he had the custody during forty days while chancellor : the second was that of embezzling £30,000. of the king's money. Becket refusing to acknowledge the authority of the court, was pronounced guilty of contumacy and rebellion against the authority of the laws ; and all his goods were confiscated. As this sentence did not reach his person, he was afterwards accused of perjury and rebellion in having violated his oath, and refused obedience to his sovereign. The archbishop was now convinced that the king was resolved on his destruction ; but his determined spirit would not suffer him to bend. He resolved to immortalize his name by a firmness which, in his opinion, ought to rank him among the most illustrious confessors of the church ; and these sentiments rendered his courage unconquerable. The court suspended his trial for treason, in order to allow him time to reflect on his situation, and to reconcile himself to the king by submission ; but it declared him guilty of perjury ; and the bishops sent him notice that they no longer considered him as their primate, but from that moment repounced his communion.

Becket now saw himself exposed to the vengeance of the king, and abandoned by the bishops; but his high spirit could not entertain a thought of submission. He declared the sentence illegal; and continued his function, regardless of the royal displeasure. Finding that nothing could move his determined mind, the court proceeded to try him on the charge of high treason. The fate of the archbishop now seemed to be drawing to a crisis. Being informed that the bishops and barons were assembled in the presence of the king, he went to the church, where having celebrated mass, he ordered these words of the 2d psalm to be sung: "The rulers took counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed." Then taking the cross in his hand, he went without, asking leave to the room where the king and the lords were sitting, and from which he was legally excluded by his former sentence. The archbishop of York and the bishop of London reprimanded him for his insolence, in thus bidding defiance to the royal authority; and told him that the weapon of the sovereign was sharper than his. "The king's weapon," replied Becket, "it is true, may kill the body; but mine can destroy the soul and send it to hell." This expres-

sion, which seemed to threaten the king with excommunication, shewed that no submission could be expected from so daring a spirit; and the court, after a long debate, declared that Becket ought to be committed to prison, and punished according to law. In consequence of this resolution, the earls of Chester and Cornwall were sent to summon the archbishop to hear his sentence; but he refused to appear, or acknowledge the authority of the court, and appealed to the Pope, adding, that were it not for the restraints of his ecclesiastical character, he would vindicate himself in single combat against any one that dared to come forward as his accuser. Becket, however, being sensible that his ruin was determined, took advantage of the night, and escaping in disguise, retired into Flanders.

The king of France being informed of Becket's arrival on the continent, and expecting that some advantage might be drawn from this singular dispute, sent him an offer of his protection, with an honourable asylum in his dominions. Henry expostulated with that monarch, but in vain. Louis replied, that he could not refuse to the unfortunate, a sanctuary in his dominions, and that he could not consider the archbishop of Canterbury as a criminal until he was condemned by the Pope.

In the meanwhile, Henry being extremely desirous of prepossessing the Roman pontiff in his favour, sent ambassadors to inform him of every particular relating to the affair, and to request him to send legates into England, in order to decide the affair. The embassy consisted of the archbishop of York, with four other bishops, and several Barons. Both sides pleaded their cause before the Pope. The archbishop of York inveighed with vehemence against Becket, who defended himself with admirable courage and skill, representing his cause as that of the universal church. The sovereign pontiff was sensible that a favourable opportunity was now offered for extending his authority, and that if he deserted the archbishop of Canterbury, none of the clergy would for the future support the privileges of the church. But he was unwilling to come to an open rupture with Henry, and fearful to commit the decision to legates, who might be biassed in their judgment by bribes. He therefore dismissed the parties, with a promise to determine the affair at a more convenient season. Henry being exasperated at this mode of proceeding, shewed his resentment by imprisoning the friends of the archbishop, by sequestrating into the hands

of the bishop of London the revenues of all the ecclesiastics who were known to favour his cause, and by various other rigorous measures, which the archbishop retaliated by fulminating the sentence of excommunication against those who adhered to the constitutions of Clarendon.

It would be equally tedious and useless to trace the whole progress of this extraordinary contest: all that is needful is to exhibit the outlines with the characters and views of the actors, and the circumstances and spirit of the times. The archbishop sent Henry a virulent letter, threatening him with the vengeance of God for troubling the church. That monarch knowing that the king of France fomented the discord between him and the see of Rome, by promising to assist the Pope, resolved to let his Holiness see what a feeble support he relied on in case of a rupture. To this end, he levied a numerous army, in order to be ready either to repel a foreign attack, or to suppress any revolt that might be excited in his own dominions.

The situation of the Pope at this time was critical. A schism had long divided the Roman see, and agitated the Catholic church. In England, France, and some other coun-

tries, Alexander III. was acknowledged as the successor of St. Peter; but a faction of the cardinals had raised to the pontificate, Victor IV. and after his decease Paschal III. whose authority was recognised in Italy and Germany. In this situation, Alexander, who was extremely apprehensive that Henry might reject his authority, and join his forces to those of the empire, was obliged to act with caution. The king of England sometimes threatened to declare for Paschal, and would doubtless have adopted that measure had he thought it possible to bring his subjects to consent to the change. These various considerations produced a long train of chicanry. Sometimes the Pope seemed ready to decide the dispute: at other times he procrastinated. Sometimes legates were sent to examine the affair; but were afterwards recalled before they had arrived at the place appointed, or were shackled by restrictions which prevented them from coming to any decision.

Henry having been occupied more than four years in this unprofitable dispute, grew extremely desirous of its termination, especially as it obstructed his design of conquering Ireland, an enterprise which he had long in contemplation. In this view, he requested

the king of France to appoint a place where he might hold a conference with the archbishop, to try if he could bring him to reason. The request was granted, and Becket appeared twice before the two kings, in whose presence he pleaded his cause with great boldness and skill; but would never give up the most minute point in dispute.

Till this period the violence of Becket had been restrained by the prudent caution of the Pope; but at length having overcome the fears of his Holiness, and obtained leave to make use of his spiritual artillery, he thundered his anathemas against such numbers of the clergy, that there were scarcely a sufficient number unexcommunicated to officiate in the king's chapel. He was vigorously supported by the archbishop of Sens, who pressed the Pope to put England under an interdict, and to excommunicate the king as an obstinate heretic. Henry being informed of the circumstance, prepared for the impending storm by issuing an edict, prohibiting the receiving of any orders from the Pope or the archbishop; and declaring, that, in case of an interdict on the kingdom, all that submitted to it should be immediately hanged as traitors; while, at the same time, he put a stop to the payment of Peter pence. These

vigorous measures made the Pope apprehensive of some dangerous revolution, in case that he should push matters to extremity, and induced him to suspend his designs of excommunication and interdict.

The dispute now appeared, for some time, to lie dormant; and during this calm Henry, who had now spent almost four years in France, returned into England, where he redressed many abuses that had crept into the administration, and instituted inquiries into the conduct of the magistrates.* Having, by these measures, given great satisfaction to the people, he caused his son Henry to be crowned, and to assume the title of king, in order to secure the succession in his family. But the king of France being greatly offended because his daughter had not been crowned with the prince, her husband, this circumstance gave rise to a new quarrel between the two monarchs, which obliged Henry to return again to Normandy, where the affair was soon terminated by a treaty.

While the king was in Normandy, he was seized with a violent fever, accompanied with so dangerous symptoms, that he firmly believed his dissolution to be at hand. In that

* Vide Tyrrel, vol. 2.

awful moment, when man is standing on the verge of eternity, his religious ideas, whether founded on reason or superstition, are usually revived. Notwithstanding the determined spirit which Henry had shewed in this dispute, his mind was evidently prepossessed by the current ideas of that age. On the expected approach of death, these prepossessions began to operate with all their force, and scruples arose in his breast, to which he had scarcely paid any attention in time of health. The pride and obstinacy of the archbishop had evidently caused the rupture; but the king, in reflecting on his own proceedings, might probably think them too severe. In every point of view to be at enmity with the church, was, in those times, regarded as a dreadful situation; and Henry resolved, in case that he should recover his health, to effect, at any rate, a reconciliation with the archbishop. It frequently happens, indeed, that resolutions, inspired by the dread of death, vanish when the danger is passed; but various considerations concurred to induce Henry to adhere to his intentions. He desired to be freed from the continual dread of excommunication, and to be left at liberty to undertake the conquest of Ireland. In pursuance to these views, as soon as his

health permitted, he held a conference with Becket and the king of France, at Montmirail, and another at Amboise. At the last of these places to which the king of France came, attended by several princes and lords, Henry agreed to almost every thing that Becket proposed. He engaged by oath to restore him to his former state, and to make full restitution to all his relatives and friends who had suffered in his cause. The king even condescended to hold the archbishop's stirrup while he mounted his horse, and gave every proof of a sincere reconciliation.

But although the archbishop had obliged Henry to forgive those by whom he had been offended, he, for his own part, was far from extending the same indulgence to the prelates, whom he regarded as his enemies. Before he departed from France, he had obtained the Pope's permission to suspend the archbishop of York, and to excommunicate the bishops of London, Durham, and Exeter; and on his arrival in England, he instantly carried the measure into execution, without paying any regard to the remonstrances of the young king, who having notice of his design, sent messengers to request him not to revive ecclesiastical contention by fulminating new anathemas. Having made

a triumphal entry into Canterbury, amidst the acclamations of the populace, he soon convinced the world, that far from being humbled by his long exile, his difficulties had rendered him, if possible, more haughty and imperious. Ascending his archiepiscopal chair on Christmas day, he solemnly pronounced the sentence of excommunication against two persons of distinguished rank, both of whom were immediate vassals of the crown. One of them he accused of retaining a manor that belonged to the archbishopric, and the other of having cut off the tail of a horse that was carrying provisions to his palace.

While Becket was dealing out his anathemas with an unsparing hand, and delivering souls to Satan with as little repugnance as he would have sent oxen to the butcher, the suspended and excommunicated prelates were gone to carry their complaints to the king, who was then at Argenton, in Normandy. After representing the troubles to which they were exposed by the tyranny of their primate, the archbishop of York said, that as long as Becket was alive, it was impossible that England should enjoy tranquillity. Henry, exasperated by these complaints, exclaimed in a sudden gust of anger, "I am unhappy

“that among the great numbers whom I maintain, there is not a man that dares undertake to free me from the insults of this insolent priest.” This expression being marked by Reginald Fitz-Urse, Hugh Morville, Richard Britton, and William Tracy, four knights of the king’s household, they resolved to undertake the perpetration of a crime which, as they imagined, would gratify their sovereign. For this purpose they went to Canterbury, and assassinated the archbishop at the foot of the altar of the cathedral, while he was performing his devotions. Thus died that celebrated prelate, whose overbearing pride and exorbitant love of power had so long agitated the church and the kingdom, and whose character has been so variously estimated.* Had he fallen by a legal sentence, impartial history could scarcely deny that he had merited his fate; but assassination is a cowardly measure, which can never admit of an apology. How far Henry was

* “About fifty years after his death, it was the subject of a public dispute in the University of Paris, whether Becket was in heaven or in hell! so ambiguous a point was his sanctity. Some asserted that for his extreme pride he deserved to be damned. Others, on the contrary, maintained that the miracles wrought at his tomb were undoubted proofs of his salvation. This last argument, indeed, would have been unanswerable, if these miracles had been as evidently proved as the fame of them was industriously spread.” Rapin, vol. I. p. 232.

guilty of the murder of Becket, it is impossible to determine. He disavowed, on oath, any participation in the crime, either by command or consent; but it appears that his indiscreet words had excited his obsequious courtiers to its perpetration, in the view of raising themselves in the favour of their prince. But whatever advantages the assassins might expect from their crime, their hopes were frustrated. Affairs took a turn that was wholly against them. They saw themselves exposed to the detestation of christendom, and the vengeance of the church, without the shelter of royal protection. Being thus cast out from the world they went to Rome; and throwing themselves at the feet of the Pope, they obtained absolution, on condition of making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem as a penance for their sin.

The character of this famous archbishop cannot be fairly delineated, except by being brought into the same point of view with the circumstances and ideas of the age. It displays a boundless ambition, mixed with an ardent enthusiasm, and supported by considerable abilities, as well as a dauntless courage. His genius bold and enterprising led him to aim at exorbitant power and immortal fame, which appear to have been

his idols; and the cause in which he embarked, was in his days eminently calculated for the attainment of these grand objects of human ambition. The church was raising herself above all secular power, and to support her authority was then considered as the road to temporal distinction and eternal glory. In that age the cause of God and religion was confounded with that of the Pope and the clergy. To form a just estimate of the character of Becket, and the motives of his conduct, imagination must carry us back to the twelfth century.

The consequences of his death were still more remarkable than the incidents of his life. From his zealous support of priestly power and privileges, he had merited from the court of Rome a place in the catalogue of saints; and the Pope was desirous to shew his gratitude to so eminent a champion of the church. But in the first place, it was necessary to convince the world that the cause, in which he died, was sanctioned by the divine approbation. Nothing was so proper to infuse this belief as miracles. The craft of the priests, and the superstition of the people, admirably concurred to their fabrication. Not all the apostles together ever wrought so many miracles to prove the

truth of christianity, as this new saint performed to support the authority of the clergy. The sanctity of Becket being thus established beyond all contradiction or doubt, his Holiness canonized him by the name of St. Thomas of Canterbury. Miracles were multiplied by priestly art and popular credulity; and his tomb became a celebrated place of resort for pious pilgrims. Before many years had elapsed, Louis VII. king of France, performed a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Thomas, in order to obtain the recovery of his son from a dangerous sickness.* The king of England met the French monarch at Dover, and having conducted him to Canterbury, both of them offered up their prayers at the tomb of this renowned saint, and implored his powerful intercession in favour of the young prince. Louis made a valuable offering of a cup of massive gold at the tomb of the saint, and granted to the monks an annual donation of seven thousand two hundred gallons of wine, which these holy fathers must have regarded as substantial proofs of his devotion. The convalescence of the heir of the French monarchy soon after proclaimed throughout

* This young prince was the famous Philip Augustus. Rapin, l. p. 239. Men. Ab. Chron. de Hist. de France An. 1179.

christendom the sanctity of St. Thomas of Canterbury, and the efficacy of his intercession.* The number of pilgrimages rapidly increased: the offerings corresponded with the piety and wealth of the pilgrims; and about fifty years after his martyrdom, the shrine of the new saint was enriched with a prodigious quantity of precious stones, and other valuable ornaments.

Henry soon had reason to apprehend, that Becket, when dead, would not give him less trouble than he had done while alive. His enemies openly accused him of being the author of the murder; and the Pope regarding this as a favourable juncture for obtaining some advantages over the king, and for augmenting the power of the Roman see, threatened him with immediate excommunication, unless he gave proofs of a sincere repentance. Henry, in order to avert the storm, sent to his Holiness an embassy, consisting of the archbishop of Rouen, the bishops of Evreux, Winchester, and several barons. At first the ambassadors were refused admission to the presence of the Pope; but a seasonable distribution of money among his courtiers procured them an audience.

* The earl of Flanders had, about two years before, made a pilgrimage to Becket's tomb. Vide Tindal's Notes on Rapin, vol. I. p. 239.

While his ambassadors were employed in averting from the sovereign and kingdom the threatened excommunication and interdict, Henry resumed the design of annexing Ireland to his dominions. The Irish having taken some Englishmen prisoners, and sold them for slaves, had offered a just pretext for invading their country. At the time when he formed the project, Adrian IV. a native of England, sat in the papal chair, and Henry easily obtained his approbation, by alleging that the enterprise would tend to promote the glory of God, and the salvation of souls—plausible pretences, indeed, but which are seldom the motives or objects of political transactions. The aim of Henry was to bring the Irish into subjection to the crown of England; and that of Adrian was to enlarge the jurisdiction and revenues of the holy see, as Ireland had not yet acknowledged its supremacy over the christian world. He therefore sent to the king his apostolical benediction, accompanied by a bull, in which, after asserting his right to dispose of Ireland, as a country unquestionably belonging to St. Peter and his successors, he gave Henry full permission to annex it to the English crown, on the laudable condition that the rights of the church should be

inviolably preserved, and Peter-pence duly paid for every house in the island. Thus the Pope, and the king of England, agreed to share the spoils of a country which belonged to neither. The depredations, however, which the Irish committed on the English, might justify the expedition; and a glance at the situation and extent of Ireland suffices to evince the importance of the conquest.

The quarrel with Becket, as already observed, had long suspended the enterprise; but, immediately after his death, a favourable opportunity occurred for carrying it into execution. Ireland was, at that time, divided into seven kingdoms, Connaught, Cork, Leinster, Ossery, Meath, Limerick, and Ulster. The king of Connaught kept the rest of these petty kingdoms in a state of easy dependence, so that the political system of Ireland seems to have borne a near resemblance to that of the Anglo-Saxons, during the existence of the heptarchy. Among the princes reigning in Ireland, at that period, Dermot, king of Leinster, was, by the extent of his dominions, one of the most considerable; but his tyranny had rendered him odious to his subjects; and by debauching and carrying off the wife of O'Rorie, king of Meath, he had embroiled himself with his

neighbours. O'Rorie, to revenge the affront, having levied an army, solicited and obtained the aid of Roderic, king of Connaught, who was regarded as the supreme monarch of Ireland. The two kings, with their united forces, attacked Dermot, who being abandoned by his subjects, was under the necessity of escaping from Ireland, to avoid falling into the hands of his enemies. Being thus expelled from his kingdom, he went into Normandy to implore the protection of the king of England, promising to become his vassal, if he would enable him to re-ascend his throne. Nothing could be more agreeable to Henry than this proposal. But as the state of his affairs did not yet permit him to send any great force into Ireland, he advised Dermot to engage some of the English barons in his cause, and to recommence the war in expectation of more effectual succours. In consequence of this encouragement, Dermot came into England, where Robert Fitz-Stephen and Richard de Clare, earl of Pembroke, surnamed Strongbow, agreed on certain conditions to assist him in recovering his dominions: the former being incited to the undertaking by the expectation of considerable possessions in Ireland, and the latter by Dermot's promise of giving him his daughter

6

in marriage, and of settling on him the succession to the throne.

The two lords lost no time in collecting their vassals and friends; and Fitz-Stephen, who was first ready, accompanied Dermot into Ireland, with about four hundred and ninety men.* The capture of Wexford was the first of their achievements; and that city was given to Fitz-Stephen, who placed in it an English colony. After this conquest, their little army being considerably augmented by the arrival of Maurice Pendergast, they marched against the king of Ossory; and that prince, who did not expect an attack, and was consequently unprovided for defence, was obliged to submit to such conditions as the conquerors were pleased to impose. It now became evident that the views of the adventurers were not confined to the assistance of the king of Leinster. Rodéric, monarch of Ireland, convened the different sovereigns, and prevailed on them to unite in a war against Dermot and the English. In the first place, however, he endeavoured to settle affairs by a treaty. But while the hostile parties were employed in the arts of political fraud, which in the

* Girald. Cambrensis, p. 164.

most barbarous ages were not wholly unknown, the earl of Pembroke arriving from England with twelve hundred men, took the city of Waterford, and put all the inhabitants to the sword. This barbarous exploit having broken off the negotiations, the earl of Pembroke married the daughter of Dermot, and soon after obtained possession of the kingdom of Leinster, in consequence of the death of his father-in-law. After this event the adventurers seeing the terror of their arms spread throughout Ireland, pushed forwards their conquests, and made themselves masters of Dublin, as well as of several other fortified places; while Roderic and the rest of the kings were in such confusion, that they made only a feeble opposition to their progress.

On hearing of this extraordinary success, Henry grew jealous of the adventurers. Apprehending that they would conquer the country without his aid and assume the sovereignty, he resolved to take effectual measures for securing their dependence on the crown of England. In this view, he prohibited the exportation of ammunition and provisions to Ireland, and commanded all his subjects to return from that country. These orders succeeded to his expectation. As soon as the adventurers were apprized

of the king's edict, they sent a deputation to assure him that they should ever acknowledge his sovereignty, and that their present and future conquests were wholly at his disposal. Henry being appeased by these demonstrations of obedience, concluded with them an agreement, stipulating that he should have all the sea-ports, and that the conquerors should retain the rest of the island to hold of him and his successors by feudal tenure.

Matters being thus settled, the king himself went into Ireland with a powerful army; and the Irish perceiving themselves unable to make any effectual resistance, avoided, by a ready submission, the evils attendant on conquest. At Waterford, Henry saw all the Irish kings arrive at his court, and swear allegiance; and thus, by the successful efforts of a few private individuals, he became master of Ireland in the same manner as the monarchs of Spain, in later times, obtained possession of their immense American empire. In both instances, vast multitudes of people were subjugated by a very small number of invaders, a circumstance which is to be chiefly if not wholly ascribed to the advantage which the conquerors derived from the superiority of their discipline,

their weapons, and their tactical skill.* The cross-bows of the English, a weapon at that time unknown to the Irish, struck that people not perhaps with the same degree of astonishment, but with a terror somewhat similar to that which the fire-arms and artillery of the Spaniards diffused among the natives of Mexico and Peru.†

Henry having thus completed the conquest of Ireland, was obliged to hasten into Normandy to meet the Pope's legates, who were sent to examine the affair of Becket's murder. After many difficulties and delays, the object of which was to enhance the favour that he was to receive from his Holiness, the king was at length permitted to clear himself by a solemn oath, that he had neither commanded nor consented to the assassination; and having publicly declared his sorrow for the indiscreet words by which he had imprudently given occasion to that crime, he received absolution on the following conditions: 1st, That he

* Christianity had somewhat regulated the morals of the Irish at that time: in other respects they do not seem to have been in a higher state of civilization than the Mexicans and the Peruvians, when conquered by the Spaniards. Vide Lyttleton's Hist. Henry II. vol. I.

† If the reader compare the conquest of Ireland, as related by Giraldus Cambrens. p. 761, &c. Hoveden. p. 512, &c. as well as by other authors, with those of Mexico and Peru, in De Solis Hist. of the Conquest of Mexico, &c. he will find a striking similarity, except that the former was effected with infinitely less effusion of blood.

should never oppose the will of the Pope so long as he was used as a catholic prince. 2dly, That he should not hinder appeals to the holy see. 3dly, He engaged himself to lead an army to Palestine to act against the infidels, and remain there during three successive years.* 4thly, To recall all those who had been banished on account of the late archbishop of Canterbury, and grant them full restitution of their estates and revenues: and 5thly, To abolish all laws and customs lately introduced to the prejudice of the church of Canterbury, or any other church in England. To these articles, which were made public, was added another of a secret nature, by which the king obliged himself to go barefoot to Becket's tomb, and receive discipline from the hands of the monks of St. Augustine. Thus did this famous contest, notwithstanding the resolution which Henry had shewed during the long space of nine years, ultimately tend to the advantage of the papal authority, by demonstrating to the sovereigns of Europe the dangerous consequences of opposing so formidable a power.

* Henry was left at liberty to change this condition to a crusade in person against the Mahomedans of Spain, in which case he was bound only to send two hundred men into Palestine. Vide Tindal's Notes on Rapin l. p. 236.

This troublesome affair being terminated, Henry might have expected some interval of peace; but vexations of a different nature arose to disturb his felicity. His licentious dissipation had excited the jealousy of the queen, whose resentment prompted his sons to rebellion. Henry, his eldest son, a prince of a haughty temper and turbulent spirit, was weary of the title without the authority of king: Richard and Geoffrey, also, had either real or imaginary grounds of complaint. The three young princes, therefore, formed the design of dethroning their father, and drew several of the English barons into the confederacy, which was also supported by the kings of France and Scotland, the former of whom thought it expedient to lessen the power of Henry on the continent, while the latter hoped to recover the provinces ceded to England by Malcolm, his predecessor.

The storm which had gathered in silence and secrecy, burst upon Henry at a moment when he little expected such an occurrence. His sons, Richard and Geoffrey, excited Guienne and Bretagne to revolt: Normandy was attacked by the king of France, aided by his vassals, the earls of Flanders, Boulogne, and Blois: the king of Scotland in-

vaded the northern parts of England; and the earl of Leicester landed with an army which had been levied in France for the support of the English barons. Henry thus saw all parts of his dominions filled with hostile armies, before he had thought of preparing for the danger; and his ruin seemed inevitable. But this dreadful conjecture only served to add lustre to his virtues. Never did his prudence and martial abilities appear so conspicuous as on this trying occasion, when he seemed to be reduced to extremity. Animated with fresh courage at the view of impending danger, he managed his affairs with such wisdom and firmness; that he gained signal advantages over the French monarch in Normandy; and an army of mercenaries hired in Brabant, which he sent into Bretagne, reduced that province to its former obedience. He then recovered the greatest part of Guienne, Saintonge, Anjou, Poitou, and Bretagne; and by these successes disconcerted the measures of his enemies. In the meanwhile, his eldest son Henry resolved to make a vigorous effort, in order to obtain possession of England. His project was to join his forces to those of the earl of Leicester and the king of Scotland, a measure which at that juncture could scarcely have failed

of success. . . But here fortune, or rather Providence, interposed in favour of the king. Young Henry marched to Gravelines, where he intended to embark; but was detained by contrary winds, until the king having restored his affairs in France, embarked at Barfleur, and by his arrival in England about the beginning of July, disconcerted all the plans of his enemies. From Southampton, the place where he landed, he proceeded directly to Canterbury to perform the penance enjoined him on receiving absolution. At the distance of three miles from the city, the king pulled off his boots, and walked barefoot to the sacred tomb of St. Thomas. He was then scourged by the prior and monks of St. Augustine, and spent the whole night in prayer in the cathedral, lying prostrate on the cold pavement. On the ensuing day, after assisting at a solemn procession round the sacred shrine, he set out for London.

This humiliation of Henry at the tomb of his inflexible opponent, impressed on the minds of the people a high opinion of his piety, and was instantly followed by events which seemed to corroborate all that had been said concerning the miraculous powers of the saint and his influence in the celestial

court. While Henry had been so actively employed in reducing his revolted provinces on the continent, his generals had also been successful in England. The earl of Leicester, at the head of the rebellious barons, with their French and Flemish auxiliaries, had already been defeated and made prisoner near St. Edmondsbury, and ten thousand of his men had fallen in the battle. This advantage, gained by the royal arms, was followed by another of still greater importance, and rendered remarkable by a striking coincidence. On the same day that Henry performed his humiliating penance, and assisted in the procession round Becket's tomb, his generals, Humphrey de Bohun, and Richard de Laci, totally defeated the king of Scotland, and brought that monarch a prisoner to England. The clergy did not fail to make use of this circumstance, in order to magnify the fame of the new saint: the credulity of the people corresponded with their efforts, and this important victory was, by every one, ascribed to the intercession of the blessed St. Thomas of Canterbury.* The king himself, if we may credit historians, adopted, or feigned to

* For the history of Henry's quarrel with Becket, vide Hoveden, p. 490 to 536. Brompt. p. 1052 to p. 1094. Lyttleton's Hist. Henry II. also M. Paris, 101, &c. M. Westminster, p. 247, &c.

adopt the same opinion, and testified his gratitude and devotion by a public thanksgiving.* Both religion and policy might have a share in actuating the conduct of Henry, but which soever of these predominated, he experienced the most beneficial effects from a compliance with the dictates of the church, and the spirit of the times. His obedience and apparent piety exculpated him in the eyes of the world, averted the thunders of excommunication, which in that age were so terrible, regained him the favour of the Pope, and confirmed the attachment of his subjects. His conduct was adapted to the times in which he lived. What one age applauds another condemns: many of the general ideas, current opinions, and established customs of our ancestors incur our disapprobation and censure, and perhaps not a few of ours will be subjects of ridicule to posterity. The story of Henry and Becket displays the ideas of the age, and may be considered as a curious and memorable occurrence in the history of the English monarchy, of the christian church, and of the human mind. But to form a just estimate of the motives which actuated their conduct, ima-

* Rapin, vol. I. p. 238.

gination must carry us back to the twelfth century.

The future operations of Henry were crowned with the most brilliant success. The rebellious barons not daring to keep the field, retired to their castles, which were reduced with great celerity.* Henry was extremely desirous of depriving his sons of their only support, the protection of France; and Louis seeing the failure of all his plans, was desirous of an accommodation. Young Henry, and Geoffrey his brother, perceiving themselves about to be abandoned by the French monarch, were glad to be included in the pacification, and at length Richard, who continued for some time longer in arms, being left without hope of assistance, was obliged to sue to his father for pardon and peace. A treaty was therefore concluded, and the reconciliation between the two monarchs of England and France being strengthened by a contract of marriage between Richard and Alice, the daughter of Louis, the princess, who was yet very young, was sent to be educated at London until she arrived at the age of maturity.

A treaty was, at the same time, concluded between Henry and William, king of Scot-

Vide Brompt. p. 1094, &c.

land, who was released from captivity on condition of restoring all the places that he had taken, and of doing homage for his kingdom to the crown of England. William also put into the hands of the English the castles of Roxborough, Sterling, and Edinburgh, as a security for his fulfilment of the articles of the treaty.

A. D. 1174. This short but active war being thus terminated, Henry enjoyed some years of tranquillity ; and the king of Scotland, with the kings of North and South Wales, and several Welch noblemen came to do him homage.* During this interval of peace he endeavoured to assure himself of the affections of his subjects by a revival of several of the Saxon laws, a measure equally agreeable to the Normans and the English, and which had several times been partially adopted,† but never established for any considerable length of time : nor did Henry himself carry it fully into effect. The progress of nations from despotism to liberty has mostly been gradual and slow ; and such it has been particularly in England.

After seven years of tranquillity, the happiest period in Henry's reign, his repose

* Vide Rapin l. p. 238, and Tindal's Notes, p. 239.

† By Henry I. and Stephen.

was again disturbed by the turbulence of his sons, who formed another conspiracy to bereave him of his crown. Their design, however, was frustrated by the death of young Henry, who, falling ill, and perceiving himself past all hope of recovery, expressed a sincere repentance for his undutiful conduct, and before he expired had the satisfaction of receiving from his father the pardon of his disobedience.

During the tranquillity which resulted from the death of this restless and turbulent prince, Heraclius, patriarch of Jerusalem, arrived at London with an offer to Henry of the crown of that kingdom, in order to induce him to undertake a croisade for the support of the christians in Palestine. The domestic affairs of the king, however, were not in so settled a state as to permit him to be long absent from his dominions, and he contented himself with furnishing a considerable sum of money for the support of the christian cause. About the same time he sent his youngest son John to Ireland, in the quality of governor, and had even formed the design of crowning him king of that island. At his arrival John was received with the greatest applause by the Irish; but his misconduct soon alienated their affec-

tions; and the king saw it necessary to recall him, in order to prevent the ill consequences that might arise from their disgust.

The troubles of Henry were only to end with his life. His sons continually found, or pretended to find, causes of discontent, Geoffrey died at Paris in the flower of his age; but Richard still revolved new plans of revolt. Louis VII. had departed this life, and his son Philip Augustus, a young and enterprising prince, had no sooner ascended the throne of France, than he formed the great design of wresting from the English the provinces which they held in that kingdom. In this view he fomented the differences between Henry and his son Richard, and began to make great preparations for war. Henry, however, for once succeeded in convincing his son that his interest, as well as his duty, obliged him to prefer the friendship of a parent to that of a foreign prince. The disastrous news that arrived from Syria also contributed to suspend the meditated hostilities between France and England. The christian kingdom of Jerusalem, founded by the first croisaders, was subverted after having subsisted about eighty-eight years, and the holy city was taken by the celebrated Saladin, sultan of Egypt

A. D. 1187.

and Syria. This intelligence roused the zeal of the princes of Europe, and another croisade was projected. Henry and Philip suspended their private animosities in order to support what, in that age, was deemed the cause of heaven; and at an interview the two monarchs, together with the earl of Flanders, agreed to take the cross, and to prepare for an expedition to the holy land.*

This sudden coruscation of zeal, however, soon vanished amidst the dark complexity of political interests and family contentions. A trifling dispute having arisen between prince Richard and the count of Thoulouse, Henry supported his son, and Philip espoused the cause of the count. These circumstances occasioned a fresh rupture between the two kings, which cooled their croisading enthusiasm. But while they were carrying on their operations with vigour, Richard suddenly and unexpectedly abandoned his father, who had engaged in the war chiefly on his account, and went over to the king of France. The motives of his conduct seemed mysterious; but he alleged, as his principal cause of complaint, that the king withheld him from espousing the princess Alice; and

* The sum of £130,000. was levied in England for the croisade. Of this the Jews supplied £60,000. Tindal's Notes, p. 242.

he also suspected that his intention was to give her in marriage to John, and to place that prince on the throne. It is evident that Philip Augustus was at the bottom of these surmises, and fomented the jealousies of Richard respecting the designs of his royal parent.

Whatever might be the grounds of Richard's suspicions, his defection involved the king in great difficulties. He saw himself abandoned by most of his continental subjects, who joined the standard of rebellion erected by his son; and his troops being every where defeated and greatly reduced in number, he was unable any longer to contend with the enterprising genius and formidable arms of Philip Augustus. Under these circumstances, Henry solicited the Pope to interpose his authority in procuring a peace. His Holiness threatened the French monarch with excommunication, if he continued to prevent Henry from fulfilling his vow of leading an army to Jerusalem; but his interference was ineffectual. Philip despised the menaces of Rome; and Henry finding himself unable to continue the war, was obliged to submit to a disadvantageous and humiliating peace on such terms as that monarch was pleased to dictate.*

* For the particular articles vide Rapin 1. p. 242 and 243.

The disastrous issue of this fatal war, which formed an inglorious and melancholy contrast to his former exploits, was not the only mortification that Henry was doomed to experience. He discovered that his favourite son John had been engaged in the confederacy with his brother and the French king, and had laboured to dethrone a father, who constantly shewed him the most tender affection. On the discovery of this new and unexpected instance of filial ingratitude and rebellion, his cup of affliction was full: his grief and indignation rose beyond all restraint: he cursed the day of his birth, and uttered imprecations against his sons, which he could never be prevailed on to retract. Broken with cares, disappointments, and sorrows, rather than with age, the unhappy monarch was now weary of life, and he soon sunk under the burden.* Falling sick at Chinon, and perceiving that his end was approaching, he caused himself to be carried into the church and laid before the altar, where, after confessing and receiving absolution, he expired in the 57th year of his age, and the 35th of a most troublesome

A. D. 1189.

* According to Brompton's account Henry died broken hearted. Vjde Brompt. p. 1154.

reign. His eyes were no sooner closed than all his domestics left him. So little respect was paid to this once-powerful monarch; that his corpse was stripped, and left quite naked in the church, from whence it was removed to Fontevraud, and interred in the choir of a nunnery which he had founded.

The character of Henry II. presents a striking mixture of virtues and vices. Prudent, valiant, and generous, studious and learned, humane and beneficent, he was qualified to shine in the threefold capacity of politician, legislator, and warrior. The political and military transactions of his reign, rank him among the greatest statesmen and commanders of his time. The equity and mildness of his laws, which subjected those who hunted in the royal forests to no greater penalty than imprisonment, were a blessing to his subjects, and his acts of beneficence endear his name to posterity. To widows and orphans he was particularly bountiful; and during a time of famine, in Maine and Anjou, he displayed his humanity in supplying, at the expense of his treasury, ten thousand poor people with food from the beginning of April till harvest. Notwithstanding the repeated rebellions by which he was harassed, historians mention few execu-

tions, and no cruel punishments during his reign, an evident proof of his humane and magnanimous disposition. But his brilliant and amiable qualities were tarnished by his unbounded ambition; and insatiable lasciviousness. He attempted the chastity of all the fair sex that came in his way, and the concurrent accounts of historians accuse him of a criminal correspondence with the princess Alice of France, who was designed to be his daughter-in-law. Among his numerous mistresses was the celebrated Rosamond Clifford, whose name has been transmitted to posterity, in history, tragedy, and popular ballads.* This lady, whom fame has represented as a paragon of beauty, appears to have completely captivated the heart of the volatile monarch, whose attachment to her was sincere and unchangeable. Her history, however, is obscure. But it appears almost certain that she was not poisoned by the queen, as related in the popular story, and it is most probable that she died a natural death. The beginning of the reign of this monarch was happy and glorious, and seemed to promise him long and uninterrupted pros-

* Nothing of Rosamond's history appears to be certain, except her beauty and her amours with Henry. See Tisdal's notes on Rapin, l. p. 236. She was the daughter of Lord Clifford.

perity. But his dispute with Becket, and the repeated revolts of his sons, produced a series of troubles that imbibited the remainder of his days. Without attaining to old age, he outlived his glory and his happiness, and died broken-hearted, exhibiting a memorable instance of royal infelicity.

The domestic unhappiness of Henry, however, did not in any great degree involve that of his subjects. His misfortunes fell chiefly on his own head, and not on the kingdom, which, notwithstanding the dissensions of the royal family, had never been in so happy and flourishing a state as during his reign. The lapse of more than a century since the conquest had mitigated the system of tyranny, which was the immediate consequence of that bloody revolution, and had softened the Norman ferocity. The conquerors began no longer to regard themselves as a distinct people from the conquered. The great barons being born in the country, considered themselves as Englishmen; and Henry endeavoured to raise the mass of the people to some share of political consequence by the establishment of corporations, which in every country of Europe was the first step towards the subversion of the feudal power.* This reign is also remarkable

* Vide Madox *Forma Burgi*, c. 1. sect 9. Hume's *Hist. Eng.* vol. 1. Append. Brady's *Treatise of boroughs passim*. It appears that

for the introduction of various arts of elegance and splendour. The croisades, the history of which remains a perpetual monument of human folly, were productive of beneficial consequences which had not been foreseen nor expected by their enthusiastic projectors. In their progress to the holy land, the followers of the cross travelled through countries better cultivated and more civilized than those with which they had been previously acquainted. Their first rendezvous was generally in Italy, in which country, Genoa, Pisa, Venice, and other cities, had begun to apply themselves to commerce, and had made some advances towards opulence and refinement. From Italy they had proceeded to Constantinople, the largest and most magnificent city of Europe, and the chief seat of the commerce, the arts, and the elegance of that age.* Even in Asia, the Europeans found the remains of the knowledge and arts which the encouragement and example of the caliphs had diffused through their

some corporations had been formed under the Saxon kings, and that the Norman grants confirmed their privileges. Lyttleton's Hist. Henry II. vol. 2. p. 317.

* The astonishment which the croisaders expressed on beholding the wealth and magnificence of Constantinople, may be seen in Wilhelm. Tyr. apud. Bong. vol. 2. p. 657, &c. Gunth. Hist. Constant. apud Canisl. Lect. antiq. vol. 4. p. 14. Vilhard. Hist. de la Conq. de Constantinople, p. 49, &c.

empire. It was not possible that the crusaders should travel through so many countries, and see their various customs and institutions, without acquiring information and improvement.* As their views were enlarged, their prejudices began to wear off, and new ideas crowded into their minds. In consequence of these circumstances, we discover soon after the commencement of the croisades greater splendour in courts, greater pomp in public ceremonies, greater magnificence in buildings, a more refined taste in pleasure and amusements, a greater elegance in manners, and a more romantic spirit of enterprise spreading gradually over Europe. This change first made its appearance in Italy, where the cities were greatly enriched by equipping the adventurers, supplying them with shipping, &c. From Italy it soon passed into France, from whence it was introduced into England, chiefly in the reign of Henry II. whose possessions in the former kingdom occasioned a continual intercourse between the two countries.

But the wealth and magnificence of Europe, and particularly of England in the twelfth

* A French historian remarks the superiority of the Italians over the western nations of Europe, in the science of civil government, at the time of the croisades. *Gest. Dei. per Francos*, vol. 2. p. 1085.

century, would appear contemptible, if estimated by the standard of modern ideas. The nobles affected to make a splendid appearance, and the gentry were as magnificent in their dress as their fortunes would allow.* But their houses were far from corresponding with the splendour of their apparel; and except the churches, the great monasteries, and the palaces of the nobility, the buildings, not only in England, but in most parts of Europe, were exceedingly mean. In London and the suburbs, most of the great barons and bishops had houses built of stone, of magnificent architecture, according to the taste of that age; but those of the citizens were constructed of wood, and covered with thatch, with lattice or paper windows. Although the art of making glass had long before been invented, the use of it for windows in private houses having passed from Italy into France, was not generally introduced into London till about A. D. 1180, only nine years before the death of Henry H.† Before that time glass windows were

* Henry II. introduced the short Angevin mantle or cloak into fashion. Brompt. p. 1150.

† M. Le Pres. Hénault observes, that about this time the fine arts began to appear in France. The cathedral of Notre Dame, at Paris, was built about the same period, the great altar piece being finished A. D. 1182.

regarded as a mark of extraordinary magnificence.* London, at that period, was supposed to contain about forty thousand inhabitants; but none of the streets were paved.†

The military regulations, so different from those of modern times, are worthy of attention; and the orders issued by Henry II. A. D. 1180, for arming his subjects, serve to give an idea of the mode of equipping, as well as of levying, soldiers. Every one who held a knight's fee, and every free layman possessing goods or rents to a certain amount, was to have a coat of mail, a helmet, a shield, and a lance: every free layman, whose goods or rent was of a less value, was to have an iron cap, a gorget, and a lance: every burghess, and every freeman of the lowest rank, was to have a horseman's coat, an iron cap, and a lance: and all these accoutrements were to be provided by each individual at his own expence.‡ The number of knight's fees into which the great baronial estates were distributed, amounted to £60,216.

* For an account of the dress, buildings, &c. of the English at that time, vide Lydleton's Hist. of Henry II. ubi supra.

† This appears to have been the case in that age in all the cities of Europe, except Constantinople, Rome, and some others of Italy, and the Eastern Empire.

‡ Vide Hovedon, p. 614.

Many of these were again subdivided without altering the nature of the tenure; and every one who held the twentieth part of a knight's fee, was regarded as a *liber homo*, a freeman, or gentleman, and was liable to bear arms.* In the space of a hundred and twenty-three years, which had elapsed from the conquest to the death of Henry II. the nobles had obtained many privileges; but the great mass of the people still remained in a state of slavery. They might, indeed, experience an increase of private happiness in the midst of the public tranquillity, and they must have derived some benefit from the introduction of more humane and polished manners among their superiors; but, in other respects, their condition was very little ameliorated.

* Vide Camp. Polit. Survey, vol. 2. p. 331.

RICHARD I.

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AS soon as Henry was laid in his grave, Richard went to Rouen, and received from the hands of the archbishop, the ducal crown of Normandy. One of the first acts of his administration was the release of the queen, his mother, whom the king, his father, had kept sixteen years in prison. Richard not only restored her to liberty, but also intrusted her with the government of that duchy, with very extensive powers and privileges. He afterwards went and did homage to Philip Augustus; but he thought no more of fulfilling his contract of marriage with the princess Alice, although the suspension of that affair had served him as a pretext for so many complaints and revolts. The interview between the two monarchs, however, was friendly, and terminated to their mutual satisfaction. Richard having settled his affairs on the continent, came to London, Sept. 3d, A.D. 1189. and was crowned by the archbishop of Canterbury. But the ceremony of the

coronation was disturbed by a popular tumult, which was attended by some disastrous consequences. At a time when the spirit of croisading pervaded all ranks, and the recent loss of Jerusalem had increased the fury of fanatical zeal, the people seized, with transport, any occasion of shewing their rancour against the enemies of Christ. It was, perhaps, with a view of preventing any disturbance that the Jews had been forbidden to be present at the coronation. Some of them, however, coming to bring presents to the king, or impelled by curiosity, pressed eagerly into the church, and were massacred by the populace. But the authors of this barbarity did not go unpunished. By the command of the king, a strict inquisition was made, and the ringleaders were condemned to death.

But this necessary severity did not prevent the repetition of similar enormities. In the ensuing year the rabble of Norwich, Stamford, St. Edmondsbury, Lincoln, and Lynn, rose upon the Jews, and destroyed great numbers of those unfortunate people. But the rage of the populace was exerted against them with the most savage cruelty at York. About five hundred men, besides women and children, in order to avoid the

fury of a fanatical mob, prevailed on the government to let them enter the castle. But the sheriff summoned them to deliver it up, and on their refusal, the castle was attacked by the people. The Jews finding it impossible long to resist so numerous a host of assailants, offered a large sum of money for permission to retire; but the ferocious rabble, thirsting for the blood of the enemies of their faith, refused to give any quarter. In this situation the unhappy Israelites, rather than fall into the hands of the enraged and sanguinary christians, resolved on the desperate measure of self-destruction. The proposal was made by an ancient Rabbi, and was received with unanimous approbation. Every master of a family first cut the throats of his wives and children, then dispatched his servants, and lastly butchered himself.* Such was the tragical fate of these unfortunate victims of an infuriate zeal.

From the moment of his accession, the views of Richard were turned towards Palestine, the theatre on which the warriors of christendom expected, by martial exploits, to acquire immortal fame and eternal salvation. Before his departure from France, he

* Brompt. p. 1171 and 1172.

had concluded a treaty with Philip Augustus, by which the two monarchs agreed to unite their forces, and march at their head, in order to recover Jerusalem from the Mahommedans. He had scarcely ascended the throne before Philip, eager for the enterprise, sent an ambassador to remind him of his engagement. This, however, was wholly unnecessary. Animated by religious zeal and martial ardour, Richard was far from seeking excuses or making needless delays. On the contrary, he urged by every possible means his preparations. As he intended to lead a powerful army into Palestine, it was requisite to raise large sums of money for its maintenance. The late king had left in his coffers £900,000. besides jewels and other valuables; and Richard levied new sums by every means that policy could devise. He sold almost all the crown lands, a measure which greatly tended to increase the already exorbitant influence of the clergy; for the bishops and abbots being the men who, in that age, had the most ready money, they were the chief purchasers, and made very advantageous bargains. The king of Scotland also improved the opportunity. In consideration of ten thousand marks, Richard discharged the Scottish monarch from the homage to which

he had been subjected by Henry II. and restored to him the fortresses of Berwick and Roxborough. There were not wanting persons who murmured against these alienations, and pointed out their dangerous consequences. But so greatly was Richard inspired with religious zeal, or the desire of martial fame, that he made only this answer to their remonstrances: "I would sell London itself if I could find a person able to purchase it."

The money amassed by these extraordinary means being still inadequate to the greatness of his designs, he devised a number of other expedients. As great numbers of persons had inconsiderately engaged in the crusade, he obtained from the Pope a power to release, for a pecuniary consideration, such as repented of their vow. He also extorted considerable sums from the most opulent of his subjects. From some he borrowed money; from others whose conduct had excited any suspicion, he extorted presents by threatening to call them to a strict account: in fine, he left no means untried to raise funds sufficient for carrying into execution the vast projects which he had formed. The clergy, at the same time, displayed their zeal, and exerted all their influence in procuring him soldiers: all the pulpits resounded with the merit of

serving in the holy war: the confessors enjoined no penances, but such as tended to promote the grand enterprise of recovering Jerusalem from the infidels. In a word, all the springs of princely policy and priestly legerdemain were put in motion, in order to raise men and money for the pious expedition.

While the preparations were going rapidly forward, Richard took precautions for the tranquillity of the kingdom during his absence. His greatest apprehensions arose from his knowledge of the ambition of his brother John, who might seize so favourable an opportunity for seating himself on the throne. He would gladly have taken that prince with him to Palestine, but observing his reluctance to the voyage, instead of compelling him to make an involuntary vow, he endeavoured, by an accumulation of favours, to secure him in his allegiance. But although no ill consequences ensued from leaving John in England, the generosity of Richard on this occasion is more to be admired than his policy. To his favourite, Longchamp, bishop of Ely, and the bishop of Durham, he committed the regency; he also renewed his treaty of alliance with the king of Scotland; and all his preparations being completed, he had no further need to delay his voyage.

On the 11th December, 1190, Richard, with all his forces, sailed from Dover, and soon after his arrival in France had an interview with Philip Augustus.* The two monarchs having settled every thing relative to their voyage, the combined armies of England and France joined at Verelai, and marched together to Lyons, where they parted, Philip proceeding to Genoa, and Richard to Marseilles. The English fleet, in the meanwhile, had been dispersed by a storm, which had prevented it from arriving at Marseilles so soon as the king expected. Impatient at this delay, Richard hired some vessels, and embarking part of his troops, set sail for Messina, the general rendezvous. But before he reached the coast of Sicily, he was joined by his fleet, with the rest of his troops, and the whole armament arrived safe at Messina.†

During their stay at this place of rendezvous, circumstances occurred which proved ultimately fatal to the success of the enterprise. At the time of their arrival, Tancred swayed the sceptre of Sicily. The Pope, who claimed the disposal of that kingdom as a fief of the holy see, had, on the death of

* At Val Remi. Brompt. p. 1170.

† Vide Brompt. p. 1173—1179; and Hoved. p. 667—673.

William the Good, without issue, given the crown to Henry VI: emperor of Germany. But Tancred, who was a natural son of king Roger, the father of William, had been elected by the Sicilian nobles, and found means to maintain himself on the throne. At his accession he had imprisoned the dowager queen who was sister to the king of England; but the arrival of that prince at Messina procured her liberation. Richard, however, was not contented with this satisfaction; and he demanded for the queen, his sister, the dower assigned her by the late king William, her husband. The delays of Tancred to comply with this requisition, together with a riot of the Messinians, who rose against the English, so exasperated Richard that he attacked the city, and having carried it by assault, displayed his banners from the walls, even in that part where the French had their quarters. Philip complained of the insult, and the great men on both sides were obliged to use their utmost influence to prevent a rupture. Richard, however, protesting that he had never intended any insult to Philip, took down his standard, and the two monarchs appeared to be perfectly reconciled. At the same time Tancred complied with the requisitions of the English monarch, and agreed to give his

daughter in marriage to Arthur, duke of Bretagne, the nephew of Richard, as well as to furnish six large ships and ten gallies for the service of the croisade.

A perfect reconciliation now seemed to have taken place between all the parties. But the Sicilian prince was inwardly dissatisfied with a treaty, which nothing but force could have compelled him to sign. He endeavoured to engage the king of France in his quarrel, and to form an alliance with him against Richard; but Philip rejected the proposal. Tancred, therefore, in order to revenge the inconveniences and insults which he had experienced from these unwelcome visitors, resolved, by sowing between them the seeds of dissension, to disappoint, if possible, their hopes of success in their future enterprises. He privately warned Richard, that Philip had formed ill designs against him, and corroborated his assertions by shewing him a letter, written, as he said, by the Duke of Burgundy. Richard, on receiving this information, expostulated with Philip, who denied the charge, and accused him of seeking a pretence for dissolving the confederacy. The quarrel was carried almost to an open rupture. Philip informed Richard, that unless he consummated his marriage with Alice,

he should regard him as his enemy. Richard peremptorily declared that he could not marry a princess who had borne a child to his father, and offered to prove the fact. Philip perceiving that his sister's honour must suffer by the investigation, desisted from his demand. After several conferences, the two Princes were apparently reconciled, and agreed to proceed in their enterprise; but from that period they were never sincerely friends, nor ever acted with that mutual confidence which was necessary to ensure success.

The two monarchs having spent the winter at Messina, made ready to pursue their voyage in the spring. Philip sailed first, ^{March,} and Richard having waited the ^{A. D. 1191.} arrival of his mother Eleanor, and his bride Berenguela, of Navarre, followed him in the course of a few days. When preparing for his departure from Messina, Richard is said to have confessed his sins to the prelates who accompanied the expedition, and to have received the discipline at their hands.* After this expurgation, he put to sea with a fleet of one hundred and fifty sail, fifty-two galleas, ten large ships laden with

* Brompt. p. 1190.

provisions, and a considerable number of small vessels; but the number of troops embarked is not ascertained by historians. The fleet being arrived off Cyprus, was dispersed by a violent tempest, and several of the vessels were wrecked on the coasts. Isaac Comnenus, king of that island, instead of giving any assistance to the English who escaped the dangers of the sea, caused them to be imprisoned, and seized their effects. Richard demanded their restitution, and on receiving a refusal, attacked the island, defeated the king, and made him prisoner. The people, who had been grievously oppressed by the tyranny of Isaac, regarded the English as deliverers rather than invaders; and Richard completed, without opposition, the conquest of the island.

From Cyprus, Richard immediately proceeded to the coast of Syria, where he found Philip Augustus already engaged in the siege of Acre. Before the arrival of the two kings, Guy de Lusignan, Conrad, Marquis of Montserrat, and other christian princes and lords of Syria, with an army composed of Germans, Flemings, and Italians, had commenced the siege of that place. Philip had joined them with his whole force, and Richard landing with the English troops, the combined armies

of the christians pushed the siege with such vigour, that Acre was at length obliged to surrender. Philip had laid before July 12th, A.D. 1191. the town since the 21st of March, and Richard from the 8th of June;* but the siege had, from its commencement, continued more than two years, and the number of croisaders who perished by the sword or by sickness before its fatal walls, is said to have been not less than three hundred thousand, among whom were the duke of Servia, the archbishop of Canterbury, and many other persons of an elevated rank from the different countries of Europe, but chiefly from France and England.

A conquest, which had cost so prodigious a number of human lives, ought to have produced the most decisive and brilliant effects. But no sooner were the banners of the christians displayed from the walls of Acre, than the success of their arms seemed only to have revived the dissensions of their leaders. The distinguished valour of the king of England had greatly contributed to the reduction of the place, and gained him universal esteem in the army. This disposition of the troops excited the jealousy of Philip, who beheld, with a malevolent eye, the glory of an ally

whom he regarded as a rival. The jealousy of the two monarchs, indeed, was mutual, and every day produced some cause of distrust, or some pretext for dissention. Before the arrival of the two kings, the christians of Palestine were divided into factions. Guy de Lusignan had swayed the sceptre of Jerusalem till the time of its capture by Saladin; but the Marquis of Montserrat had pretensions to that kingdom, and several of the christian barons were disposed to favour his claim. Yet this dispute was only for an empty title, as the greatest part of the country was in the possession of Saladin; and it was only from the expected success of the arms of the *croisés*, that either of their claims could derive any importance. The question, however, was made a new source of discord between the two monarchs. Philip openly declared in favour of the marquis; and Richard espoused the party of Guy. Amidst these contentions which greatly obstructed the progress of the christians, the two kings felt sick of the same distemper. Their lives were, for some time, in great danger; but both of them recovered.* Philip finding his constitution greatly impaired by his

* Rapin says that both of them lost their hair. Hist. Eng. l. p. 250. Henault says that Philip lost his hair and his nails. Abreg. Chron. An. 1191.

sickness, resolved to return to France. Richard being apprized of his intention, apprehended that Philip might, in his absence, attack his dominions, and at first insisted on their agreement, that neither of them should abandon the enterprise without the other's consent. But as he could not constrain him to stay, he released him from that part of the contract; and Philip having bound himself by an oath not to attempt any thing against the dominions of Richard during his absence,

July 31,
A. D. 1192. left Palestine, and passing through Italy, returned to France. At the time of his departure, he left ten thousand men under the command of the duke of Burgundy, to whom he gave public orders to pay the same obedience to the king of England as to himself. But his future conduct gives reason to suspect that he had received private instructions of a different tendency.

Soon after the departure of the French monarch, Richard and Saladin exhibited to their armies a spectacle of horror in massacring the prisoners whom each had in his power. It is difficult to determine on which of the two princes history ought to fix the stigma of this barbarous deed.* But the

* Vide Rapin, vol. 1. p. 251, and Tindal's notes, *ibid.* The duke of Burgundy followed the example of the king of England.

most probable opinion is, that Saladin having refused to pay the ransom of the Turkish prisoners, as stipulated by the capitulation of Acre, Richard began the massacre by beheading between two and three thousand, or according to others, five thousand of his prisoners; and that Saladin retaliated by the slaughter of his christian captives. But whatever apology may be made for the law of retaliation in war, it is generally the innocent who suffer for the crimes of their superiors.

After this horrible scene was closed, the christians held a council of war, and the siege of Ascalon was resolved on by the commanders. The army marched along the coast, attended by the fleet to supply it with necessaries. Saladin having intelligence of their design, advanced with an army of three hundred thousand men, and took an advantageous position in their front, in order to cover Ascalon. Whatever might be the disparity of numbers, Richard resolved to hazard a battle, and undauntedly approached the enemy.* The right wing of the christian army was commanded by James D'Avesnes, the left by the duke of Burgundy, and the king of England led the main body. Saladin

* The strength of Richard's army is not ascertained by any historian; but it must have been greatly inferior to that of Saladin.

having concealed a part of his army behind some hills that were near his camp, waited their approach, without stirring from his position. The right wing of the christians began the engagement: the Saracens received their charge with a resolution, which being supported by numbers, threw them into disorder; and James D'Avenas was slain in endeavouring to rally his retiring troops. At the same time the Duke of Burgundy made a vigorous attack on the right of the Saracens, which, pursuant to the orders of Saladin, retreated in fighting, and caused the duke to advance to a considerable distance from the main body of the army. The stratagem having so far succeeded, Saladin ordered the troops that were posted behind the hills to move forward. By this manœuvre, the duke was surrounded, a terrible slaughter was made of his troops, and the whole wing that was under his command was in danger of being annihilated. At this critical juncture, Richard, who had been successful in the centre, was informed of the situation of the duke of Burgundy, and marching instantly to his relief, wrested from the troops of Saladin, a victory of which they thought themselves certain. On this memorable occasion, Richard performed such prodigies of valour, as excited the admiration even of his

enemies. It was some time, however, before the contest was decided. But after a variety of manœuvres, victory at last declared for the christians. In spite of all the efforts of Saladin, his troops were thrown into confusion. The christians taking advantage of their disorder, pressed them so vigorously that the route became general. Thus the vast army of Saladin was totally defeated; and forty thousand infidels left dead on the field of battle, attested the victory of the christians.

After defeating this multitudinous host of enemies, Richard took possession of the maritime cities of Ascalon, Joppa, and Cæsarea, which Saladin had abandoned, after demolishing their walls. The christians considered it as a matter of importance to repair the fortifications of these cities, and to establish magazines for the army before they advanced into the interior. This caused a considerable delay in their operations, and the English monarch has been accused of losing the fruits of his victory, by not marching directly against Jerusalem, as Hannibal has been blamed for not assaulting Rome immediately after the battle of Cannæ; but in one case, as well as the other, it is difficult to form a just judgment amidst a complexity of circumstances, with which his-

torians are in all probability but partially acquainted.* After the fortifications of the maritime cities were repaired, Richard at length began his march to Jerusalem. In his route he had the good fortune to meet with a caravan, which was carrying to that city a supply of provisions, and a large quantity of merchandise.† The caravan was guarded by a body of eleven thousand horse, who finding themselves near the christian army, attempted to retreat. But the king by a sudden and vigorous attack put them to flight, and took three thousand loaded camels, and four thousand horses and mules, with an immense booty, which he immediately distributed among his troops. Richard then continuing his march, ascended a hill, from whence he had the pleasure of seeing Jerusalem, the

* During Richard's stay at Joppa, a curious incident happened. Having been hunting in the country with only six attendants, he fell into an ambuscade of the Saracens, and would have been taken prisoner, had not William Despreaux, by calling out, "I am the king of England," drawn all their attention to himself, and given to Richard an opportunity of making his escape. Despreaux being taken and carried to Saladin, ingenuously confessed the device he had used to save his master. The sultan applauded his fidelity, and caused him to be honourably treated. He was afterwards exchanged for ten emirs, or Saracen princes. Rapin, vol. 1. p. 2. 251.

† Rapin calls this the Babylon caravan; but Babylon was at that time become a place of no consequence. It might have been the Bagdad caravan; but how in its road from either Babylon or Bagdad to Jerusalem, it could fall in with the christians in their march from the coast, is somewhat difficult to explain, and requires a more circumstantial account than historians have given.

grand object of his expedition. But a distant view of that famous city was all that he obtained. The country being destitute of forage, and the season far advanced, he was obliged to defer the siege until spring. In the meanwhile, the dissensions among the christians revived. The duke of Austria abandoned Richard: his example was followed by the duke of Burgundy; and the marquis of Montserrat, who commanded the Italian troops, and laid claim to the crown of Jerusalem, refused to assist in conquering a kingdom which was designed for his rival. The defection of the Germans, French, and Italians, rendered it impossible that the king of England should, with the troops that remained, accomplish so difficult an enterprise as the reduction of Jerusalem, which contained a garrison almost as numerous as his army, and was plentifully stored with provisions. These circumstances, together with the intelligence which he received relating to the state of affairs in England, and his apprehensions that Philip Augustus might take advantage of his absence to invade his dominions, obliged him to abandon all his views of further conquests in the east; and Saladin being desirous of ridding himself of so formidable an enemy, a truce for three

years was readily concluded. The king of England being now about to depart, the christian troops that were to be left in Palestine elected the marquis of Montserrat for their commander. Richard, who had openly opposed the pretensions of the marquis, was displeased at a choice so contrary to his intention; but he gave to Guy de Lusignan the kingdom of Cyprus, which was an ample compensation for the loss of an empty title to the crown of Jerusalem.*

Thus terminated this famous croisade, which drained both France and England of men and money, but totally failed in regard to its object. The fatal rendezvous at Messina may be considered as the source of the misfortunes, or misconduct of these romantic adventurers. How far the insinuations of Tancred might be consistent with truth, it is impossible to determine; for whatever historians may pretend to know, and presume to relate, concerning the secret views of

* Previous to Richard's departure, the marquis of Montserrat was stabbed in the streets of Tyre by two assassins sent for that purpose, by the Old Man of the Mountain, a Saracen chief, who was stiled the Prince of the Assassins. He had always in his service a number of desperadoes, ready to go to any part of the country, and assassinate any person that he wished to sacrifice to his policy or his vengeance; and from these people some have supposed the word assassin to be derived.—As Richard had always been hostile to the views of the marquis, he was, at first, suspected of being accessory to the murder; but the discovery of the real authors of the crime cleared his reputation of that blemish.

princes and the intrigues of courts, the complex machinery of politics is generally enveloped in mysterious obscurity. This, however, is certain, that the Sicilian prince, by exciting dissensions between Philip and Richard, blasted all their hopes of success; and that these two monarchs in attending to their personal quarrels, lost sight of the object of their enterprise, and rendered ineffectual their formidable armament, which might have recovered the kingdom of Jerusalem, and even have overturned the throne of Saladin.

Although the operations of the croisade were terminated, both Richard and his kingdom had yet to experience its disastrous consequences.

Oct. 9th,
A. D. 1192. Affairs being settled in the east, the king of England embarked at Acre, and sailed to the Isle of Corfu. From thence he proceeded up the Adriatic, and meeting with a violent tempest, was wrecked between Aquilcia and Venice. Either through ignorance of the country, or for some other reason which has never been explained, he entered the territories of the duke of Austria, whom he knew to be his mortal enemy, and took the road to Vienna.* This part of Richard's

* At the siege of Acre the duke of Austria having erected his banner on a tower which he had carried by assault, Richard considered

history, although strictly true, is extremely mysterious. It might naturally be supposed that he would have sailed to Marseilles, from whence he might, either publicly or privately, have readily passed to Guienne, or some other part of his own continental dominions. Some say that he was driven up the Adriatic by contrary winds; but if this was not the case, and if he intended to proceed over land from Venice, or some place at the bottom of the gulph, Vienna was certainly not in his road to England; nor can any good reason be assigned for his entering the territory of a prince from whose enmity he had every thing to dread. Indeed it appears that he was fully sensible of the danger to which he was exposed, as he travelled in the disguise of a pilgrim. At first he had six attendants, all of whom had long beards like pilgrims; but he afterwards dismissed all of them, except one single servant. Some indiscretion on his part, or on the part of his attendants, had discovered him to be a person of very high rank and distinction, and various cir-

this action as an insult to himself and Philip, who were the commanders in chief, and sent some of his men to pull it down, and trample it under foot. The duke had it not in his power at that time to revenge this affront; but he ever after entertained an implacable enmity against the king of England. Vide Rapin, vol. i. p. 250.

cumstances excited a conjecture that this remarkable pilgrim was no other than the king of England. The rumour coming to the ears of the duke of Austria, he ordered a diligent search to be made, and Richard was seized in a village near Vienna.* The duke afterwards resigned his royal prisoner to the emperor, Henry VI. on condition of receiving a large share of his ransom.

The news of this event flying rapidly over Europe, soon reached England, where it excited great consternation. Ever since the departure of Richard for Palestine, his brother John had been endeavouring to set aside the rights of his nephew Arthur, duke of Bretagne, and to secure to himself the succession, in case that the king should perish in the expedition. The bishop of Ely, to whom in conjunction with the bishop of Durham, Richard had committed the regency, had excluded his colleague from the administration, and so greatly abused his power as to excite against him a confederacy of the lords, who placed prince John at their head. The result was that the regent was deposed, and compelled to fly into Normandy, and the archbishop of Rouen, was by the unanimous

* Vide M. Paris, p. 172; and Hoveden p. 717.

consent of the barons appointed to the regency. These circumstances having procured for John a greater share in the administration than the king had intended, he made use of his influence to acquire popularity, and even prevailed so far on the citizens of London, as to obtain from them a promise that they would acknowledge him as their sovereign, in case Richard should die without issue. The imprisonment of the king contributed to strengthen his hopes, and he began to take measures for obstructing his return, and for ascending the throne. He attempted, but without success, to seduce the barons of England and Normandy; and finding their allegiance not to be shaken, he repaired to Paris, and entered into an alliance with Philip Augustus, who, in direct violation of his oath, immediately invaded Normandy. The dowager queen, in the meanwhile, used every means to repress the ambition of her younger son, and strongly solicited the Pope to interpose with the emperor for the release of the king; but all her endeavours were ineffectual, as his Holiness, through fear of offending the French monarch, refused to have any concern in the affair.

While the queen ineffectually laboured to procure the exertion of the papal authority,

in favour of the captive monarch, the emperor, in order to cover his injustice with legal forms, ordered Richard to be brought to trial before the diet of the empire. The deputies sent by the queen and council to inform him of the state of affairs in England, met on the road their unfortunate king, who was conducted like a criminal, a sight which drew tears from their eyes. Being brought to Haguenau before the assembly of the German princes, the emperor preferred against him a charge consisting of six articles. 1st. He accused him of joining in a league with Tancred, who had usurped the kingdom of Sicily. 2d. He alleged that by his quarrels with Philip Augustus, he had prevented the conquest of Jerusalem. 3d. That he had unjustly invaded the kingdom of Cyprus, and employed the arms of the *croisés* to dethrone a christian prince. 4th. That he had affronted the duke of Austria at the siege of Acre. 5th. That he had been concerned in the assassination of the marquis of Montserrat; and 6th. That he had concluded a truce with Saladin, greatly to the detriment of the christian cause.

It is certain that neither the emperor, nor the princes of Germany, had any right to bring the king of England to be judged at

their tribunal. Richard, however, being informed of the machinations of his brother John, and of his confederacy with Philip, was sensible of the necessity of a speedy return to England, and apprehensive of the danger of giving occasion to delay, which must have been the case had he refused to stand a trial before the diet. He therefore briefly observed, that although he did not consider himself accountable to any power upon earth for his actions, yet, for the sake of his honour, he was willing to vindicate himself before that illustrious assembly of princes. He then proceeded to make his defence against the charges brought forward by the emperor, and replied distinctly to every article with such cogency of reasoning as convinced the diet of his innocence, except in regard to the affront of the duke of Austria, which Richard could not deny, but only observed, that it was already sufficiently revenged. The sordid emperor, however, could not, by any means, be induced to release his prisoner without an exorbitant ransom, especially as the king of France had offered him a large sum to keep him in perpetual confinement. The captive monarch, therefore, in order to obtain his liberty, was forced to promise the payment of a hundred

and fifty thousand marks, of which the duke of Austria was to have one-third for his share; and also to give his niece, Eleanor of Bretagne, in marriage to the eldest son of that prince.

The treaty being signed and sent to England, every means was used to raise the sum stipulated for the king's ransom. This was found to be a matter of extreme difficulty. No more than a hundred thousand marks could be raised by taxes, by borrowing one year's wool of the religious houses, and by taking the plate belonging to the churches.

While the English were actively employed in raising money for the ransom of their king; his ungenerous brother, and the French monarch, tried every means to induce the emperor to violate his agreement, and detain him in prison. They offered him eighty thousand marks to keep him a prisoner till Michaelmas, and after that time, a thousand pounds sterling per month as long as he should hold him in confinement. They even proposed to pay the whole ransom of a hundred and fifty thousand marks, provided that he would deliver Richard into their hands. In fine, if the emperor refused this proposal, their ambassador, the bishop of Beauvais, was instructed to offer him the same sum, on condition that he should detain him one year.

These offers had such an effect on the sordid emperor, that he deferred the liberation of his prisoner till the next diet. It is easier to conceive than express the anxiety of mind under which the king must have laboured while in this distressing situation. He saw fraternal and foreign injustice and perfidy combined for his ruin; and was too well acquainted with the intriguing ambition of Philip and John, and the sordid disposition of the emperor, to indulge the hope of ever returning to his dominions. The diet at length being assembled at Spires, ^{February,} A. D. 1194. the emperor intimated his intention of breaking his agreement with the king of England. But the German princes expressing their astonishment at such a proceeding, declared that their honour being engaged for the execution of the treaty, they could not suffer it to be violated with impunity. So strong a remonstrance was not without its effect: the emperor consented to liberate his prisoner on receiving a hundred thousand marks, with hostages for the fifty thousand that remained unpaid.

Richard was no sooner set at liberty than he set out on his journey towards England, and travelled with all possible expedition. As soon as he reached Antwerp, he embarked

for England, and arrived at Sandwich, after an absence of four years, of which March 20th,
A. D. 1194. he had passed fifteen months in the prisons of Germany. But the demonstrations of joy with which he was received by his subjects, were sufficient to make him forget the hardships of his captivity. His first care was to discharge the vow which he had made to offer to God the magnificent standard of Cyprus, in the church of St. Edmond. He then set out to reduce some castles which were yet in the power of his brother. Of these Nottingham castle stood a siege of some days, but the others were surrendered without resistance. John having taken refuge in France, was summoned to appear within forty days, to answer the charges exhibited against him. The prince not appearing within the limited time, the king confiscated his estates, and declared him incapable of succeeding to the crown.

Philip Augustus, in the meanwhile, having taken possession of some places in Normandy, Richard immediately prepared to contend in the field with an antagonist, from whose ambition and perfidy he had experienced such disastrous effects. But England was so drained of money, that it was extremely difficult to raise funds for the war, and every

mode of exaction was adopted, in order to defray the expences of equipping and maintaining an army. His preparations being at length with difficulty completed, Richard passed over into Normandy, where the mediation of the dowager queen effected a reconciliation between him and his brother. John, throwing himself at his feet, expressed his repentance, and craved forgiveness. The king, in deference to his mother, granted his request. "I forgive you," said he, "and wish I could as easily forget your offences as you will my pardon:"—an expression which plainly intimated what opinion he entertained of John's sincerity.

The wars which ensued between Richard and Philip, although they were prosecuted with vigour, and displayed, on both sides, many instances of military heroism, were productive of no events of national importance. The capture and recapture of a few insignificant towns and fortresses, are such common occurrences as scarcely merit the attention of the reader ; and the balance of strength between the two nations, as well as of personal abilities between the two monarchs, was too equal to admit of any decided preponderancy. But while Richard was employed on the continent, an event took place

at London, which ought to be noticed by those who investigate the history of nations, as well as that of courtiers and kings. A new tax being imposed, the burden of which was to fall chiefly on the lower classes, the populace flew to arms. The insurrection was headed by William Fitz-Osborn, commonly called Longbeard, a man of a bold and enterprising spirit, who had always professed himself the advocate of the people, and was held by the poor in extreme veneration. In order to quell the tumult, Hubert, archbishop of Canterbury, who was, at that time, the justiciary, mustered in arms the principal citizens. Longbeard was unable, with his disorderly bands, to maintain the contest, and finding himself overpowered, took refuge in one of the churches. No sanctuary, however, could screen him from punishment. He was dragged from his sacred asylum; and afterwards hanged in chains, with nine of his accomplices. This is the first instance, in English history, of the people making any struggle against the power of the barons and clergy.*

* In this reign lived the famous Robin Hood, whose origin is so difficult to trace, but whose popular story is so universally known. Vide Tindal's Notes, 2. p. 236.

A. D. 1195 to

A. D. 1199.

A war of four years between England and France, was terminated by a truce. But the reign of Richard was drawing to its close. A gentleman, of Limosin, having found on his estate some treasure which had been buried, the king claimed it as his right in quality of sovereign of the country. This created a dispute; and the owner of the treasure sheltered himself in the castle of Chaluz. Richard soon appeared before the place; and during the siege was mortally wounded by an arrow from the walls. After languishing eleven days he expired, having nearly completed the tenth year of his reign. His nephew, Arthur, duke of Bretagne, had, by hereditary right, the best claim to the crown; but Richard, by his last will, appointed John to be his successor. His desire of preventing a civil war in the kingdom, must have been the only reason for which he set aside the claims of his nephew to gratify the ambition of a brother, from whom he had received the most ungenerous treatment.*

* It is said, that the place having surrendered before the king expired, he ordered the person who gave him the wound to be brought before him; and asked the reason why he had marked him out as his victim; and that the man boldly replied, "It was to revenge the death of my father and my brother, both of whom fell by your hand; and I am ready to suffer whatever tortures you may chuse to inflict,

Richard I. was in person tall, and well proportioned. His eyes were blue and sparkling; and his hair of a bright yellow, inclining to red. His character was of a romantic cast, displaying an extravagant ardour for martial enterprises, and wild adventures. His most commendable qualities were his magnanimity and dauntless courage, which procured him the surname of *Cœur de Lion* or *Lion-heart*. His principal vices were an unbounded ambition, and an unbridled lust. To these some have added an inordinate love of money; but when we consider that his vast projects required an extraordinary expenditure, we shall be ready to suppose that his avarice was entirely subservient to his ambition; and, indeed, the whole tenor of his conduct shews that he was rather profuse than parsimonious.

His adventures, like his character, were romantic and extraordinary. At one time we view him at the head of the combined

“since I have the satisfaction of ridding the world of a tyrant.” It is added, that the king generously forgave him; but that the general of the Flemish troops, who took the command after his death, caused him to be flayed alive. It is somewhat extraordinary, that, although historians agree that Richard died of a wound, they greatly differ concerning both the name of the person who wounded him, and the place where it happened. The generally received opinion is, that it was at Chalus. Compare Hemingf. p. 550, Grev. p. 1638, apud Tind. Brompt. 1771, Hen. Ab. Chron. An. 1199, Rapin, &c.

armies of christendom, displaying his banners in Palestine, and triumphing over Saladin, the most potent and warlike monarch of Asia: at another time we see him wandering in the disguise of a pilgrim, the next moment languishing in the prisons of Germany, and afterwards standing as a criminal before a foreign tribunal. Even after his return to his kingdom, which had seemed to promise him lasting felicity, his restless disposition, and the hostility of Philip Augustus, left him scarcely a moment of repose, till, at last, he closed a turbulent life by a premature and tragical death.

His reign of nearly ten years, of which not more than eight months were spent in England, was extremely oppressive to his subjects. They were loaded with excessive taxes and extraordinary impositions, which exhausted and impoverished the kingdom; but the fame of his martial exploits secured their fidelity to the monarch, even in the worst of his circumstances. No benefit accrued to the people from his splendid achievements; but they were satisfied with the glory of their king, which they considered as that of the nation; and this was their only compensation which they received for the vast sums that were lavished in support of his extravagant

enterprises. At no period since the Danish invasions had the wealth of England been so greatly exhausted. In setting out for the Holy Land, the king, and the great barons engaged in the expedition, almost drained the kingdom of its coin to defray the multifarious expences of a distant war; and the payment of his ransom, with the expences of the succeeding war with France, completed the exhaustion. A modern reader can scarcely form any idea of the scarcity of cash, at that time, in England; and accustomed to calculate taxes and loans by millions, he will be astonished that, of three hundred thousand pounds, the sum stipulated for Richard's ransom, no more than two hundred thousand could be raised in the kingdom by excessive taxation, by loans of wool, and by borrowing the plate, &c. of churches, and by every other expedient that policy could devise.* The one hundred thousand pounds that remained were never paid. The duke of Austria dying soon after, acknowledged the injustice of his conduct; and on his death-bed forgave his share of the debt, and released the hostages. And the emperor being engaged in a quarrel

* N. B. 150,000. marks were, at that time, equal to £300,000, sterling of modern money.

with Philip Augustus, while he meditated a war against France, his desire of a reconciliation with Richard, induced him to relinquish his remaining claims.* England was thus exonerated of a debt, the payment of which must have been the work of several years. Amidst the multiplied exactions of this reign, some events, favourable to liberty, took place. In the reign of Henry II. the city of London was made a corporation, and had obtained a charter; but soon after the accession of Richard, its government assumed a new aspect by being placed in the hands of sheriffs and mayors.† In regard to the relations between the king and the subjects, but little alterations appears to have taken place during this reign. While Richard could be supplied with money for romantic wars, and the people were dazzled by his martial glory, neither the king nor the subjects appear to have been inclined to dispute about prerogatives and privileges.

* Rapin 1. p. 255.

† Stow 2. p. 100.

JOHN.



IN those ages the laws of succession were not so accurately defined as in modern times. Richard had assumed the right of disposing of the crown to the prejudice of his nephew, Arthur, duke of Bretagne, the son of his elder brother; and John, founding his claim on the will of his predecessor, met with little opposition in ascending the throne of England. The French provinces, however, resolved to acknowledge Arthur; and the claims of that prince were supported by May 26th.
A. D. 1199. Philip Augustus. John was no sooner crowned at London, than he heard of the progress of Philip, who, under pretence of acting for Arthur, was rapidly reducing his continental dominions. This intelligence obliged him to change the repose of a court for the bustle of a campaign. Within the short space of a month he departed with a powerful army. A minute detail of the war would, at this day, be little interesting. It suffices to say, that, after a few

military operations of no great importance, a peace was concluded on terms sufficiently advantageous to John, but fatal to the interests of Arthur, who, being deprived of the assistance of France, was soon forced to yield up all his provinces, except the duchy of Bretagne.

This season of tranquillity scarcely continued two years. A revolt of the Poitevins against John, furnished Philip with a favourable opportunity of recommencing the war; and that prince, whose great object was to wrest from the crown of England its possessions on the continent, demanded, for Arthur, all the French provinces. Arthur having placed himself at the head of the Poitevins, besieged his grandmother, queen Eleanor, in the castle of Mirabel. This enterprise proved fatal to his hopes. John, marching to the relief of his mother, defeated Arthur, and made him prisoner. M. Paris affirms, that most of the nobility of Poitou and Anjou, were taken prisoners in this battle; and some say, that twenty-two of them being sent to the castle of Corfo, were starved to death.* The princess Eleanor of Bretagne, sister to Arthur, falling also into the hands of the

* M. Paris, p. 173. Tindal's notes on Rapis, l. p. 264.

king, was sent into England, and confined in Bristol castle for the space of forty years. The unfortunate duke being imprisoned in a tower at Rouen, disappeared in such a manner as left no room to doubt of his murder. The king's friends caused a report to be circulated that he was drowned in the Seine, in attempting to make his escape. A French historian asserts that John murdered his unfortunate nephew with his own hands, and even pretends to relate the particulars.* But as it is difficult to conceive how these could come to his knowledge, no great degree of credit can be given to his account. The cotemporaries of John were fully persuaded of his guilt, and posterity will never regard him as innocent. The Britons openly accused him of the crime, and Philip Augustus, resolving to profit by the juncture, summoned John as his vassal to appear before him and the barons of France. The king of England offered to appear before that tribunal, on condition of a safe conduct; but when that was demanded, Philip only replied that the safety of his return depended on the sentence that should be passed upon him. The ambassadors of John represented that their

* Vide D'Argentré Hist. de Bretagne, chap. 78. p. 210, &c.

master was king of England, as well as duke of Normandy, and that the barons of his realm would never consent that he should expose his person to such a danger, unless an assurance were given of his safety. To this Philip answered, "Is not the duke of Normandy my vassal? if he has acquired a higher title, what is that to me: ought I therefore to lose my right of sovereignty?" The ambassadors on receiving this answer, clearly perceived that Philip was resolved to push the affair, and immediately returned to England. The time appointed in the summons was no sooner elapsed, than Philip caused John to be condemned for non-appearance, and pronounced sentence against him, declaring the forfeiture of all the dominions which he held by homage of the crown of France.*

While Philip was preparing to carry the sentence into execution, the king of England, who absurdly regarded it as a vain bravado, neglected every means of defence. The French monarch, therefore, at the head of a powerful army, soon reduced the greatest part of Normandy. On this occasion the apathy of John appears inexplicable. With-

* The sentence is recorded verbatim. Paul. Emil. Vita. Philippi,

out attempting to arrest the progress of the French arms, he retired to England, and Philip re-annexed Normandy to the crown of

France three hundred and eighty-one years after its separation.*

After this success, he invaded the rest of the English provinces, which readily submitted to the conqueror, and of all the extensive territories which Henry II. and Richard I. possessed in France, John had nothing left but Guienne.

So many and such great losses, at length roused the king of England from his lethargy. He mustered a formidable army; but instead of embarking in person for France, he contented himself with sending a small force under the command of the earl of Salisbury. With so feeble an armament as that nobleman commanded, nothing could be done, and a truce for two years was concluded. The king laid the blame of all his losses on the barons, whom he accused of backwardness

* There is some chronological obscurity in this calculation. Rapin says that Normandy had been three hundred years in a state of separation from France. *Hist. Eng.* vol. 1. p. 266. Tisdal, in his notes, extends this period to three hundred and twenty years. M. Le Prestre Henault is not clear on the subject; but from his chronology it appears to have been three hundred and eighty-one, or three hundred and eighty-two years. *Ab. Chron.* ad An. 912, &c. and 1208. The French historians seem at a loss to fix the date of the establishment of Rollo in Normandy.

to follow him into Normandy, and under that pretence extorted from many of them considerable sums. To begin preparations for enterprises, which he never executed, appears to have been one of his favourite maxims of policy, as it afforded him an opportunity of obtaining money by parliamentary grants, or arbitrary exactions.

Hitherto the troubles of John had originated from his own misconduct, and the ambition of Philip Augustus. But foreign wars were succeeded by civil dissensions, which were ultimately productive of more fatal effects, and involved John in a quarrel with the Pope, more embarrassing than the dispute between Henry II. and Becket. This disastrous contest arose from a common occurrence, the death of Hubert, archbishop of Canterbury. The election of the archbishops had, for some time, been a subject of dispute between the suffragan bishops and the monks of St. Augustine. Immediately after the death of Hubert, a cabal of these monks met at midnight in the cathedral, and without consulting the fraternity, elected the sub-prior of their monastery. This irregular election was conducted with all possible secrecy. The other monks had not the least suspicion of the transaction ; and the sub-prior, attended

by some of his partisans, immediately set out for Rome, in order to obtain the papal approbation. But on his arrival in Flanders, his indiscretion divulged the secret. The whole fraternity of monks, incensed at the conduct of the cabal, proceeded to a new election ; and the bishop of Norwich, being recommended by the king, was unanimously chosen, and invested with the temporalities. Fourteen monks were sent to the Pope to demand the confirmation of the new archbishop ; and, at the same time, the suffragan bishops sent a deputation to Rome to complain of the arrogance of the monks in assuming the right of election. The three different parties pleaded their cause before Innocent III. who resolving to take this opportunity of establishing a precedent of pontifical authority, annulled both the elections ; and ordered the monks to elect Cardinal Stephen Langton, an Englishman who was then at the court of Rome. Surprised at this unprecedented injunction, the deputies alleged that they were not empowered by their monastery to elect an archbishop ; besides that the king's consent was necessary. These reasons did not accord with the views of the pontiff. Innocent III. who ascended the papal throne at the vigorous age of thirty-five, was a man of a bold

and daring spirit, and had formed the resolution of establishing his despotic authority over the christian world. He told the monks that, as deputies, they represented the whole monastery; and that the consent of kings was not necessary to elections made in his presence. Without allowing them time to reply, he commanded them, under pain of excommunication, to elect Cardinal Langton for their archbishop; and the monks overawed by the presence, and terrified by the menaces of the Pope, reluctantly complied with his injunctions.

The king was no sooner informed of this transaction, than he accused the monks of St. Augustine of having deceived him, and not only expelled them from their monastery, but also banished them from the kingdom. He then wrote a threatening letter to Innocent; but the pontiff was not to be terrified by menaces. After expostulating with John, and finding him inflexible, he laid the kingdom under an interdict, a measure of papal policy calculated to strike the people with terror, and induce them to consider the king as the sole cause of their misfortunes. Divine service immediately ceased in all the churches, the sacraments were no longer administered, except baptism

to infants, and the eucharist to dying persons. The church-yards were shut up, and the bodies of the dead were thrown into ditches like dogs. The interdict, although it had no effect on the king, had an awful influence on the minds of the people. The kingdom, indeed, was in a horrible state: the king issued an edict of confiscation and banishment against the ecclesiastics who obeyed the interdict; but the sheriffs were unable to carry the order into execution; and many went out of the kingdom who preferred a voluntary exile to the danger of being exposed to the royal indignation. Some ecclesiastics persisted, in spite of the interdict, to celebrate mass and administer the sacraments; but they were incessantly exposed to the insults of the zealots; and the Pope thundered against them the sentence of excommunication. Thus the clergy and people of England were exposed to persecution on every side, while neither the king nor the Pope were moved by their calamities.

While the kingdom was thus groaning under regal and papal tyranny, John was not without some uneasiness. However he might disregard the spiritual thunders of Rome, he could not, without some degree of dread, see the generality of his subjects

inclining to the party of the Pope. Considering a strong military force as the best safeguard against his enemies, he raised an army under pretence of a war with Scotland. He marched into the North; but on receiving eleven thousand marks from the Scottish monarch, he desisted from the enterprise. Some commotions in Ireland also furnished the king with a pretext for equipping another large armament at the expence of the Jews, from whom he extorted sixty thousand marks, by causing them to be seized throughout the kingdom and cruelly treated, until they consented to ransom themselves by the payment of such sums of money as were required. Having restored tranquillity in Ireland by defeating and taking prisoner the king of Connaught, whose revolt had caused the disturbances, and received the homage of the other Irish princes, he returned to England, and imposed, without the authority of parliament, a tax of a hundred thousand pounds on the ecclesiastics, for the maintenance of his army.*

The Pope, although he saw John inflexible, and endeavouring to render himself formida-

* M. Paris, p. 230. Rapin says a hundred thousand marks.

ble, resolved to push the affair to extremity. He knew that the king had, by his tyrannical conduct, lost the affections of his subjects; and he rightly judged that to alienate them wholly from his interest, nothing more was necessary than to break the only bond by which they were still attached to their sovereign. Perceiving him not to be moved by the interdict of the kingdom, Innocent thundered against him the sentence of excommunication, and absolved his subjects from their oath of allegiance. This sentence was followed by another, which declared that John, being convicted of rebellion against the holy see, had forfeited the crown. Nor did the papal thunders consist of empty menaces. The Pope committed the execution of his decrees to Philip Augustus, king of France, and promised him as his reward the remission of all his sins, together with the kingdom of England to him and his posterity. He also published a croisade against John, exhorting all christian princes to direct their arms against the enemy of the church, and sent letters to the principal nobles, and the most distinguished knights and warriors of different nations, promising to those who should either by money or personal service

contribute to the success of the expedition, the same privileges as were granted to persons, who visited the holy sepulchre.*

Philip readily accepted the commission given him by the Pope ; and the magnitude of his preparations demonstrated his ardent desire of carrying it into execution. His numerous fleet, collected from all quarters, assembled at the mouth of the Seine, while the princes, his vassals, and the great men of his realm, repaired with their forces to Rouen, the general rendezvous of the army. John, in the meanwhile, exerted the remains of his power in preparing to oppose the threatened invasion. He summoned all his barons to meet him at Dover with their troops, under the penalty of exemplary punishment in their persons, besides the confiscation of their estates, and issued orders in the same menacing stile, that all the ships belonging to his subjects should immediately repair to that place. If John did not possess the art of gaining the affections of his subjects, he knew how to inspire them with fear. Almost all of them were disaffected, but as they had not yet formed any confederacy, each one was intimidated into a compliance with the royal

* Rapis, l. p. 271 ; and M. Paris, in Tindal's notes, *ibid*.

requisition, and besides a great number of ships, an army of sixty thousand men was collected.

The two monarchs having nearly completed their preparations for attack and defence, both sides of the channel were overspread with their troops; and the decisive blow was daily expected. But the Pope proved too refined a politician for both: in all probability he had never intended that England should fall under the power of the king of France; and he took for himself what he pretended to design for Philip Augustus. He sent Pandulphus, his legate, to John, in order to complete the execution of the project which he had formed. The legate passed through France, where he beheld Philip's formidable armament, and highly applauded his zeal and diligence. He then went over to England, under pretence of negotiating with the barons in favour of the French monarch, and had a conference with John soon after his arrival. At this interview he represented to the king of England the superior strength of his enemy, and the disaffection of his own subjects, and informed him that Philip had received private assurances from most of the English barons, that instead of opposing his arms,

they were ready to assist him to the utmost of their power. He intimated that there remained only one way to secure himself from the impending danger, which was to put himself under the protection of the Pope, who, in imitation of him whose representative he was on earth, desired not the death of a sinner, but like a kind and merciful father, was still willing to receive with open arms his penitent son.

Historians have universally condemned the pusillanimity shewed by John in this singular negociation ; but the impartial politician must confess that his circumstances were peculiarly distressing. Standing on the brink of two precipices equally dangerous, he could not avoid casting himself down one or the other, without time to consider which was the most eligible. While Pandulph pressed him incessantly to submit to the Pope as the only means of safety, Philip Augustus, ready to embark, afforded him no leisure for deliberation. But that which perplexed him the most was his distrust of his army, and his dread of a treachery, the consequences of which could not fail of being fatal. On which side soever he turned, he could see no alternative but either to fall into the hands of Philip, or to throw himself on the mercy of

the Pope. He therefore consented to the proposal of the legate, and bound himself by a solemn oath to perform whatever his Holiness should require. Having so far succeeded, the artful Italian so well managed the barons, and intimidated the king, that in the presence of his astonished subjects he laid his crown and other ensigns of royalty at the feet of the legate, and solemnly resigned the kingdoms of England and Ireland to Pope Innocent III. and his successors. The resignation was confirmed and witnessed by a charter signed by the king; in which he acknowledged himself a vassal of the holy see, and engaged to pay an annual rent of a thousand marks, seven hundred for England and three hundred for Ireland, and also agreed that if he or any of his successors should refuse the submission due to the Pope, such disobedience should involve a forfeiture of the crown.* This disgraceful transaction took place in the church of Dover, and John soon after received absolution. In the following year, the king, in the presence of all the barons convened at Westminster, repeated the same ceremony, and signed another charter which was sealed with

* M. Paris, p. 235, 236, &c. where see the charter at large.

gold, the other being sealed only with wax, after which the kingdom was relieved from the interdict under which it had groaned for

June 29th,
A. D. 1214.

the space of six years. Cardinal Langton protested against this vassalage of England to Rome, and laid his protestation on the altar. The Pope was highly incensed at a conduct so hostile to the interests of the holy see ; but he did not at that juncture deem it expedient to indulge his resentment. He took care, however, to mortify the cardinal archbishop, as well as to establish his sovereignty over England, by commissioning his legate to fill all the vacant benefices, which were invariably conferred on Italians.

The reconciliation which had taken place between the king of England and the Roman see, placed Philip Augustus in a situation singularly embarrassing. All his preparations were completed : his numerous fleet was in readiness to transport his armies across the channel ; and his imagination had already placed him on the throne of England. But at the very moment in which he expected to execute his grand project, and realize his magnificent speculations, he was informed by Pandulph, the legate, that the king of England being become an obedient son of

the church, the cause of the armament had ceased, and the sentence issued against him was revoked. It is easier to conceive than express the astonishment and indignation of the French monarch on seeing himself so egregiously duped. He declared, that, as he had made these preparations against England at the pressing instance of the Pope, no contrary orders should induce, nor any power on earth compel him to desist from his design. He then convened a general assembly of the vassal princes of France, to whom he painted the conduct of Innocent III. in the blackest colours. His aim was to assure himself of the support of his vassals in spite of the papal censures. All of them seemed inclined to comply with his intentions, except the earl of Flanders, who opposed the expedition against England, and reprobated the ambition and injustice of Philip, not only respecting that enterprise, but also in regard to the conquest of Normandy, and the other provinces of which John had been deprived by his arms. This opposition from the earl furnished Philip with a pretext for marching his army into Flanders. His progress, at first, was extremely rapid, and the ruin of the earl would, in all probability, have been immediately

completed, had not the English fleet engaged and entirely defeated that of France. Some of the French historians say, that the fleet of Philip consisted of seventeen hundred ships ; but M. Le President Henault considers the statement as exaggerated.* That author relates, that the English fleet amounted to five hundred sail. Rapin does not mention the number of ships on either side ; but only says, that the English took three hundred, and sunk one hundred. Henault says, that the French fleet was entirely destroyed.†

After John had placed himself under the protection of the Pope, he hoped to experience more obedience from his subjects than he could have expected while under the sentence of excommunication. Philip Augustus being engaged in an important war with the emperor Otho, who had joined his forces to those of the earl of Flanders, John considered the juncture as affording a favourable opportunity for recovering his former possessions in France. After making the preparations necessary for so important an enterprise, he sailed to Rochelle with a numerous army, and entering Poitou, quickly reduced that

* Hen. Ab. Chron. An. 1213. It is improbable that these circumstances should be accurately known.

† Rapin l. p. 273. Henault Ab. Chron. ubi supra.

province to his obedience. He then proceeded into Anjou, where a success nearly similar at first attended his arms. Philip being absent in Flanders, could not leave that country to oppose this sudden attack ; but his son, prince Louis, having raised an army, marched against the English, and either defeated them or at least compelled them to retreat. Notwithstanding this check, John had forces sufficient to carry on the war with the prospect of a favourable issue ; but the victory which Philip Augustus gained at Bovines over the emperor Otho, July 27th, A. D. 1214. totally extinguished his hopes. In this famous battle, the army of the emperor and his allies, the earl of Flanders, and the dukes of Louvain and Brabant, is said, by some historians, to have consisted of a hundred and twenty, and, by others, of a hundred and fifty thousand men ; while that of the king of France was greatly inferior in number.* Philip, although thrown from his horse, and trodden under foot, was so fortunate as to gain the most decisive victory that had crowned the French arms since the days of Charlemagne. A dreadful slaughter

* Hœnault states the army of the emperor at 150,000 ; and that of the king of France at only 50,000. *Ab. Chron. An. 1214.*—Tindal estimates Otho's army at 120,000. *Vide Note on Rapin, vol. I. p. 274.*

was made of the allies; and the earls of Flanders and Boulogne, with three other earls, were made prisoners.* After this battle, no prince of Europe dared to contend in arms with Philip Augustus. The king of England made a precipitate retreat from France; and through the interference of the Pope, a truce was agreed on between the two monarchs.

After so many troubles, John might have hoped to spend the remnant of his days in tranquillity, in the degraded state of vassalage, and under the shelter of papal protection. But a storm, not less dreadful than those to which he had already been exposed, had long been gathering, and his duplicity at length rendered it fatal. His past conduct, which had been a compound of cruelty, imprudence, indolence, and capricious tyranny, had long since alienated the affections of his subjects. As soon as he returned from his French expedition, the barons, who had long had their object in view, resolved to demand, in a body, the re-establishment of what they considered as their privileges. At the time of the conquest, the Normans and other foreigners were enriched by the spoils of the English, who in

* Tindal's Notes, *ibid.* Henault mentions only the earls of Flanders and Boulogne. *Ab. Chron. An. 1214.*

vain alleged their privileges. The Normans did not object against the despotic authority of the king, so long as it was exercised for their advantage. But when they saw themselves firmly settled in their new acquisitions, they began to perceive the danger of their situation under an arbitrary power, which might deprive them of what the Conqueror had given to their ancestors.* By degrees they became anglicised: they imbibed the English genius; and desired the re-establishment of the Saxon laws of the time of Edward the Confessor. For this purpose, they availed themselves of the circumstances of William II. Henry I. and Stephen, at their accession. As these princes had not a legitimate right to the crown, they were obliged to be indulgent to those who placed it on their heads, and to promise them the revival of the Saxon laws: Henry II. in order to secure the affections of his subjects, made pretences to the same effect. But not one of these kings adhered to their solemn engagements. Although reasons of policy induced them to promise what they never intended to perform, they knew that the Normans

* The absolute authority of William in England was the effect of the conquest. In Normandy his power was very limited. Vide *Tyrrel Biblioth polit.* 10.

had no right to demand the restoration of the Saxon laws, without the abolition of which, they could not have been settled in their English estates. Ever since the accession of William Rufus, this contest between prerogative and privilege, had been in a fluctuating state; and the balance had inclined to one side or the other, as the power of the king or the barons happened to preponderate.

The period now under consideration was extremely favourable to the baronial pretensions. John was hated and despised by the whole nation: Philip Augustus was his enemy; and as to the assistance which he might expect from the Pope, it could consist only of spiritual arms—weapons which have no edge, except what they derive from fear, or from the circumstances of the times. Besides these considerations, the king having lost his French provinces, could draw no support from that quarter.

The barons, emboldened by this favourable concurrence of circumstances, presented a petition to the king, demanding, in the most respectful language, but in plain and express terms, the re-establishment of the Anglo-Saxon laws. John, alarmed at a demand which he was unwilling to grant, but dared not openly reject, desired them to wait for an answer till Easter; and the barons,

although they plainly perceived that his design was only to amuse them, thought fit to accede to the proposal, in order to avoid the imputation of precipitancy.*

The term being expired, most of the principal lords of the kingdom assembled at Stamford, and were attended by two thousand knights and their followers, composing, altogether, a formidable army. The king sent the earl of Pembroke, and the archbishop of Canterbury, to receive their memorial; but as soon as he saw its contents, he fell into a violent passion, and uttering the most dreadful imprecations, said, that the barons intended to deprive him of the government of the kingdom. The confederate lords being convinced that their demands were to be obtained only by force, chose Robert Fitz-Walter for their general, with the imposing title of "mareschal of the army of God and "of the holy church." They commenced their military operations by the siege of the castle of Northampton, which they afterwards raised, and made themselves masters of Bedford. At the same time they had secretly entered into a treaty with some of the principal citizens of London, who agreed to deliver to them one of the gates of the city.

* The names of the confederate barons are given by M. Paris, p. 254.

On being informed of the successful issue of the negotiation, they advanced with the greatest expedition to London, and coming to Aldgate, which was opened to them, they entered the city before the king, who was in the Tower, and had notice of their approach. Having thus become masters of the city, they immediately laid siege to the Tower, and dispatched circular letters to the lords of the royal party, as well as to those who stood neuter, informing them that their estates would be plundered and their houses demolished, if they did not immediately join them in supporting the common cause. These menaces had their desired effect: many lords, on whom the king most relied, were impelled by fear to join the baronial standard; and John being apprized of the general defection, took the only measure that in his situation was practicable. He informed the barons that he was ready to grant their demands; and a plain called Runnemede,* which, according to Matthew of Westminster, signifies in the Saxon language the meadow of council, from its having been anciently used for the meeting of national assemblies, was appointed as a place of interview for the

* Between Westminster and Staines.

final adjustment of the affair. In this place, so memorable in English history, the king acceded to all the baronial demands which were contained in the two charters, one called *Magna Charta*, or the great charter, and the other the charter of the forests. These two famous charters were signed by the king, and by all the lords spiritual and temporal. They were also confirmed by the king's solemn oath, and strengthened by every precaution that could be devised for their observance.

In this accommodation with the barons, the king had pretended voluntarily to grant what was, in reality, extorted by force, and he resolved, as soon as possible, to free himself from the restraints imposed on his authority. The foreigners whom he entertained near his person, were sensible that the diminution of the regal power would be fatal to their own influence; and they incessantly urged him to shake off the yoke. The measure was perfectly agreeable to his own inclination, but the execution involved formidable difficulties, as he knew not where to procure either men or money to enable him to contend with a whole nation in arms. Despair, however, suggested an expedient. Recollecting the example of William the Con-

queror, he dispatched his agents into France, Flanders, and Germany, with orders to promise to those that would enter his service, the confiscated estates of the English barons, and authority to sign the specific grants in his name. By similar engagements William had raised an army, which had made him master of England, while his followers had acquired immense possessions; and the remembrance of their success excited an incredible number of daring adventurers to enter the service of John, in hopes of the same advantages. While his agents were actively employed in levying troops, the English monarch was securing the support which might be derived from the papal authority. Convinced by fatal experience, how greatly that formidable power might either promote or impede the execution of his plans, he solicited the assistance of his Holiness, representing, that as a vassal of the holy see, he had protested against the charters which contained so many encroachments on the regal power, and consequently on that of the Pope, the paramount sovereign. Innocent III. being thus flattered in the most sensible part, annulled the charters, and commanded the barons to renounce their pretensions, under pain of excommunication. The court

of Rome had now entirely changed its language. John, so lately the enemy of the church, and the object of a croisade, was, since his submission to the Pope, cried up as the most pious of princes, and proposed as a model to christian monarchs, while the barons were stigmatised as rebels and apostates.

While these things were transacting with all possible secrecy, the king, in order to elude suspicion, seemed totally negligent of every concern, and chusing the Isle of Wight for his residence, passed his time in conversing with sailors and fishermen. The people, in the meanwhile, were forming various conjectures concerning the causes of his retirement, and the barons were amusing themselves with jocularly observing, that he was about to turn either fisherman, merchant, or pirate. But they had little apprehension of the storm that was about to burst on their heads. The king's affairs were transacted with a secrecy that appears almost incredible; but in those ages the channels of intercourse between different countries were not so numerous and open, nor the communication of intelligence so easy and rapid as in modern times.* During the space of three months,

* Vide Rouquet Rec. des Hist. vol. 7. p. 515, and vol. 10. p. 351; and Robertson's Hist. Charles V. vol. 1. note 29.

John remained in his sequestered recess, waiting in anxious suspense the return of his agents, and the arrival of his foreign troops. At length having received advice of their readiness for embarkation, he left his retreat and repaired to Dover, where he soon had the satisfaction of seeing the arrival of vast numbers of adventurers from France, Flanders, and Brabant, all soldiers of fortune, and willing to hazard their lives to obtain an estate. With these forces, John prepared to treat the posterity of the Norman conquerors as they had formerly treated the English. He commenced his operations by the siege of Rochester, which he captured, and put most of the garrison to death. After this success, he proceeded to ravage the estates of the barons, who finding themselves unable to keep the field, took refuge in London. Dividing his army into two bodies, he gave one to his natural brother the earl of Salisbury, with orders to ravage the southern counties, while he himself, with the other, marched towards the northern parts. Having crossed the Thames, the king advanced through St. Alban's to Dunstable, Northampton, and Nottingham, demolishing the houses of the nobles, and devastating their estates. The earl of Salisbury at the same

time desolated Essex, Hertford, Middlesex, Cambridgeshire, and Huntingdonshire.* But during the absence of these two armies, a numerous body of the barons and their followers took the field, and traversing Norfolk, Suffolk, and some parts of the neighbouring counties, they demolished the houses, and laid waste the estates of the king's adherents. Never did England exhibit a more melancholy picture. The Pope fulminated the sentence of excommunication against the revolted barons, and laid the city of London under an interdict for having espoused their cause. The spiritual weapons of the Pope, however, could only inspire imaginary terrors, but the temporal arms of the king were productive of dreadful realities. He displayed, with unfeeling barbarity, the direful effects of his vengeance; and the whole kingdom was given as a prey to foreign desperadoes, who set no bounds to their rapacity. It is easy to conceive the outrages to which the people must have been exposed amidst those anarchical scenes of military licence and universal pillage.

The confederate lords were now in a most deplorable condition: instead of recovering

their privileges, they were bereaved of their property : they saw their estates given by the king to foreigners, and their souls consigned to Satan by the papal anathema. This desperate situation impelled them to take a desperate course. They resolved to call in the aid of Philip Augustus, whose power, though unable to deliver them from the gripe of the devil, might support them against the tyranny of the king ; and they offered the crown to his son Prince Louis, on condition that he should bring into England an army sufficiently strong to wrest it from their oppressor. The French monarch, without hesitation, accepted the offer : he had before meditated the conquest of England ; but the destruction of his fleet, rather than the menaces of the Pope, had obliged him to desist from the enterprise ; and he considered the juncture as extremely favourable to its renewal. A treaty was therefore soon concluded ; and a body of troops was immediately sent to the aid of the barons, with assurances that the prince should soon follow with a powerful army.

Innocent III. was no sooner apprized of these transactions than he dispatched his legate to France, in order to put a stop to the preparations. The legate, in the name of the Pope, forbade Philip to carry his arms

into England, as being a part of St. Peter's patrimony, and denounced the penalty of excommunication against any person that should directly, or indirectly, assist the English barons. The French monarch, regardless of these menaces, replied, that England was no part of the patrimony of St. Peter, as it was evident that neither John nor any other prince could subject his kingdom to the Pope, without the consent of the states. Yet, as Rapin observes, this was "the same Philip who, three years before, by the sole authority of a papal commission, considered himself as entitled to the crown of England. The same barons also who scrupled to obey John, when under the sentence of excommunication, disregarded the anathemas of Rome when directed against themselves, so readily can men make their religious principles correspond with their interests."

The papal prohibition did not interrupt the preparations of Philip Augustus; and his son Louis was soon ready to sail with a fleet of six hundred ships, and fourteen small vessels.* The king of England not thinking himself able to prevent his landing, retired to Winchester, and the French prince arriving

* M. Paris, p. 282. Rapin says seven hundred.

at Sandwich, disembarked his army without
May, opposition. He commenced his ope-
A. D. 1216. rations by an attack on Rochester,
which surrendered after a feeble resistance ;
and the capture of that city was followed by
the submission of the whole county of Kent,
except Dover castle, where John had placed
a strong garrison.

The Pope having been unable to prevent
the French expedition, had commissioned the
abbot of St. Augustine's, to declare prince
Louis excommunicated the moment that he
should set foot upon English ground. In
consequence of these orders, the abbot ful-
minated the sentence of excommunication
against Louis and all his adherents. The
thunders of the church, however, did not
impede the progress of the French prince.
From Rochester he advanced to London,
where the citizens and barons swore fealty to
him, and he pledged himself by a solemn oath
to reinstate them in their possessions, and
restore their privileges. From that period
Louis acted as king of England, and having
appointed for his chancellor Simon Langton,
whose election to the archbishopric of York
had been annulled by the Pope, that prelate
persuaded the barons and the Londoners to
despise the censures of Rome. Mass was

therefore celebrated, and the sacraments administered as usual, notwithstanding the interdict,

Louis having soon become master of most of the southern counties, proceeded into the eastern parts, and reduced Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, and Lincolnshire. His adherents also took York, and Alexander I. king of Scotland, who came to do him homage, subdued for him the county of Northumberland. Louis was already preparing to complete the conquest of the north of England, when he received a letter from his father, containing a reproof for leaving behind him the castles of Dover and Windsor, which Philip deemed of greater importance than the northern parts of the kingdom. In consequence of this reprimand, Louis marched back and laid siege to Dover, while Windsor was invested by the English barons. About this time John had the mortification of seeing himself deserted by his Flemish and Poitevin troops, whom Louis found means to entice away from his service.

The French and baronial troops being occupied in the sieges of Dover and Windsor, John, who till then had thought himself too weak to take the field, left Winchester, and marched into Suffolk and Norfolk, where he

again devastated the estates of several of the barons.* From thence he proceeded to Stamford, and afterwards to the confines of Wales, where he demolished the castles of the lords who had espoused the party of Louis.† The unhappy monarch was now continually in motion, carefully avoiding a battle, as he could place little confidence in his troops, and apprehended that his officers, most of whom were French, might consult their own interests, by betraying a master whose cause began to seem desperate. He retired to Lynn with his treasures, his crown, and the other regalia; but on the approach of the barons, he thought it expedient to remove to some place of greater security.‡ In this view, he commenced his retreat into Lincolnshire; but in crossing the wash which separates that county from Norfolk, some misinformation respecting the flow of the tide, or more probably some unforeseen and unavoidable impediment to his march, exposed him to a fatal disaster.|| Before the passage could be com-

* M. Paris, p. 286.

† Id. p. 287.

‡ In acknowledgement of the loyalty which the town of Lynn had invariably shown, John, among other great privileges and honours, erected it into a mayoralty, and presented the first mayor with his own sword.

|| This marsh, or shallow, which is regularly overflowed by the tide, is well known by the name of Cross Keys Wash.

pletely effected, he was overtaken by the tide, and all his baggage was swept away by the waters. He arrived that night at the abbey of Swineshead, where he took up his lodging. Excessive grief for his loss, which in his circumstances was irreparable, in concurrence with the effects of continual fatigue and disappointment, threw him into a fever, accompanied with a dysentery. The next morning, being unable to ride, he was carried in a litter to Sleaford, and the day after to Newark, where, after making his will, by which he appointed his son Henry, then only ten years of age, his successor, he expired in the fifty-first year of his age, and eighteenth of his reign, which had been as unhappy as any that is recorded in history.*

The character of John, as depicted by the generality of historians, appears a compound of all the vices that can degrade humanity. Some allowances, however, must be made for popular prejudices, and the exaggerations of writers, as well as for the peculiar circumstances of the monarch. The ravages of his foreign army caused him to be regarded as

* John reigned seventeen years, seven months, and ten days. Some writers pretend that he was poisoned; but besides the circumstance not being mentioned by any historian that lived within sixty years of the time, the tale itself appears too romantic to merit attention. See Rapin and Tindal's notes, 2. p. 279.

the destroyer of his country: he died under the curse of public resentment; and it is therefore no wonder that those who were so hostile to his government, should endeavour to blacken his memory. Although his indolence, while Philip Augustus was conquering his dominions in France, has branded his character with cowardice, yet, from a general view of his conduct, he seems to have possessed a considerable degree of courage. His base resignation of his crown to the Pope may be ascribed to the terrible circumstances in which he was placed. His perfidy to his barons, and his introduction of foreign troops to oppress his own subjects, resulted from his love of arbitrary power. The example, however, was followed by the barons themselves. If the king, when his affairs seemed desperate, subjected his kingdom to the Pope, the Barons, in a similar moment of distress, gave it to the son of the French monarch, the avowed enemy of England, who ravaged the country with an army of foreigners. Impartial history must therefore allow, that, on both sides, imperious circumstances dictated these desperate measures. In his contest with the Pope, the cause of the king was just, although unsuccessful. In the dispute with the barons, justice was on their

side: they contended for their own liberties: he laboured to preserve that system of arbitrary power which none of his predecessors had ever been willing to relinquish. But when the character of John is viewed in the most favourable light, it appears, from the plain evidence of facts, that his disposition was cruel, and his administration tyrannical. The number of his natural children are also convincing proofs that, in his private, as well as his public life, he paid little regard to moral restraints; and no eminent qualification can be found in his character to balance his numerous vices.* But the judicious observer will perceive, that, had it not been his misfortune to be placed in contact with the superior genius of Philip Augustus, the enterprising ambition of Innocent III: and the turbulence of powerful barons, his reign might have presented a very different aspect; and as mankind commonly estimate the measures of princes by their success, historians would probably have exhibited his character in less disgusting colours. Perhaps no mortal was ever more desirous of obtaining a crown than John, and no one ever experienced more fully its troubles and cares.

* Tindal, in his notes on Rapin, vol. 1. p. 280, gives the names of eight of his natural children, viz. six sons and two daughters.

The reign of this prince is celebrated in history as the æra of the first dawn of English liberty. The royal authority, indeed, was confined within fixed limits ; and the privileges of the nobility and clergy were accurately defined by the *Magna Charta*. But amidst all the struggles between the crown and the barons, no regard was paid to the rights of the people. The great mass of the peasantry remained in a state of feudal bondage, attached to the soil, and considered as the property of their lords, like the sheep and oxen upon their estates.* Notwithstanding what historians relate concerning the struggles for freedom, both the barons and the clergy were the decided enemies of public liberty, and their parties must be considered as factions in the state subversive of the common rights of mankind. In the feudal ages, kings were the chief and almost the only friends of real freedom. Their interest prompted them to balance the power of the barons, by exalting the great body of the people ; and even John, whom historians depict as one of the greatest of tyrants, was,

* Those who had the guardianship of an heir were to preserve the lands entire, without destruction or waste of the men or things upon the estate. "Sine destructione et vasto hominum vel rerum." *Magna Charta*, cap. 5.

perhaps, more a friend to general liberty than his turbulent barons, who contended so strenuously for their own privileges. This monarch erected several corporations or free-boroughs, and first gave to the city of London its excellent civic constitution by granting to the citizens authority to elect, annually, their mayor, whose office, before, was for life, as also to chuse their sheriffs, and common council.* These were the first steps toward popular freedom; and from that period the city of London began to hold the balance between the crown and the aristocracy.

* These important privileges were granted to the city of London A. D. 1208. See the account of the transaction in Stowe's *Surv.* b. 5. p. 101.

HENRY III.



HENRY III. as already observed, was only ten years of age when the death of his father devolved upon him the precarious succession to a disputed throne. An infant king appeared unlikely to contend against the formidable power of France, and most of the barons of England; and a few lords, who had firmly adhered to the king, his father, with a foreign army of doubtful fidelity, were the only instruments that he could employ in support of his right. In the earl of Pembroke, however, young Henry found a subject equally loyal, courageous, and politic;—equally capable of projecting and executing the greatest designs. This nobleman assembled the few lords who adhered to his party, and addressing them with all the force of eloquence and argument, prevailed on them to recognize Henry as their king. A day was appointed for his coronation, which

Oct. 22th,
A. D. 1216. was solemnized at Gloucester, in presence of the Pope's legate, and of an

inconsiderable number of spiritual and temporal peers. As things were circumstanced, the ceremony could not be performed with great pomp. The crown being lost in John's disastrous passage over Cross Keys Wash, a plain circle or chaplet of gold, such as time and circumstances allowed them to procure was substituted in its place. After the coronation was performed, the legate caused the young king to do homage to the holy see; a requisition with which it would have been extremely dangerous to refuse compliance at a moment when the Pope's assistance was so greatly wanted, and when all sorts of arms, both spiritual and temporal, were necessary to combat the hosts of foreign and domestic foes, by which the throne of the infant king was surrounded.*

In the mean while, the confederate barons were highly dissatisfied with Louis, who treated them with apparent distrust, and conferred all honours and rewards on the foreigners who followed his standard. Previous to the death of John, their disaffection to Louis began to arise, and it was fomented by an improbable report that was artfully

* Vide Tyrrel, p. 843, &c. Hemingfield lib. 3. p. 561, &c. Rapin 1. p. 296.

circulated. It was asserted, that Louis had, in a private council of sixteen French lords, declared his intention of banishing all the English barons who supported his cause, as traitors to their country; and the discovery was said to rest on the solemn attestation of the Visconte de Melun in his expiring moments.* It requires but little knowledge of history, or of the intrigues of political parties, to perceive that the whole tale was only an artful fiction, calculated to excite the jealousy of the barons, and alienate their affections from the prince whom they had called to their support. The report seems to have gained some credit; and the barons had conceived so great a suspicion of the French, that no less than forty of them had privately given to John assurances of their desire of returning to his obedience. The death of that monarch, therefore, seems to have happened at the moment when the tide of fortune was about to turn in his favour.

The earl of Pembroke, who was constituted regent of the kingdom during the minority of Henry, was not ignorant of the dissensions which prevailed among the barons, and he judged that despair of pardon was the prin-

* See the whole of this improbable story in Rapin, vol. 1. p. 279.

cial bond that retained the majority of them in their attachment to Louis. He therefore sent letters to all the barons, sheriffs, wardens of castles, and corporations, throughout the kingdom, promising pardon and great rewards to those who should return to their duty. The Pope's legate, at the same time, ordered the sentence of excommunication against the French prince, and all his adherents, to be read every Sunday in the churches. These measures had the desired effect; and the party of Louis began gradually to decline. That prince, however, carried on his military operations with great activity and vigour, though not with invariable success. Being repulsed in all his assaults on Dover, and finding that the governor, Hubert de Burgh, was neither to be intimidated by threats, nor seduced by promises, he raised the siege, and reduced the castles of Hertford, Berkhamstead, Sleaford, Norwich, and Colchester, with some other places, after which he returned to London. On the approach of Christmas, the two hostile parties agreed on a truce, which lasted till a month after Easter. As soon as the term was expired, the earl of Chester commenced the siege of Mount Sorrel, in Leicestershire, which was held by a French garrison. But

A. D. 1217.

on the approach of the count de Perche, mareschal of France, with an army of twenty thousand men, he raised the siege and retired to Nottingham. But Lincoln was the theatre where the issue of this important contest was chiefly decided. The city had declared for Louis and the barons; but the castle, although it had been long besieged by Gilbert de Gaunt, still held out for Henry, and baffled all the attempts of the assailants. The reduction of Lincoln castle was therefore the grand object of the French general, while the regent was not less anxious for its preservation. In their march from Mount Sorrel to Lincoln, the French troops committed such horrible ravages, that historians have described them as an army of devils.

The castle of Lincoln being considered by both parties as an object of the greatest importance, the French were no sooner arrived than they renewed the siege with all possible vigour, and incessantly battered its walls with their engines, while the earl of Pembroke was with equal ardour preparing to make a grand effort for its relief. He assembled his troops, and used so great expedition in his march, that he advanced to Newark before the French had determined whether they should remain in Lincoln, or march

out of the city and give him battle. Surprised at his sudden approach, the French general called a council of war to decide on the subject. The opinions were various. Some advised to march out and meet the enemy, as their principal strength consisted in cavalry, which might be advantageously employed in the field, but would be of little use in the city; and they supported their opinion by observing that the surrender of the castle would be the certain consequence of victory. Others represented that it would be preferable to maintain their position within the city, as the walls might be easily defended, until the castle, which was already reduced to extremity, should be compelled to surrender, and that they might then sally out and attack the regent. This opinion prevailed, and every measure was taken by the French for defending the city, while they continued the siege of the castle. In the meanwhile, the English army approaching without opposition, the earl of Pembroke ordered a body of chosen troops, commanded by Faulk de Brent, to enter the castle by a postern gate which opened into the fields, and the blockade of which the French had unaccountably neglected. That officer had no sooner entered, than in pursuance of his instructions, he

sallied out on the French, while the army stormed one of the gates of the city. The count de Perche perceiving himself thus attacked from different quarters, made every possible effort for defence, while the royal army, encouraged by the presence of the regent and the papal indulgences, which were liberally bestowed by the legate on all that should fall in the conflict, kept up an incessant assault. At length, notwithstanding a most obstinate resistance, the troops of the regent entered the city, while the French being pressed on the other side by those who issued from the castle, and deprived of the assistance of their horse by the narrowness and precipitous declivity of the streets, were soon thrown into confusion; and a dreadful slaughter ensued. The French general and almost his whole army perished in this terrible conflict. The city of Lincoln, which had constantly adhered to Louis and the confederate barons, was given up to a general pillage; and the loss of which Geoffrey de Drapinges, one of the precentors of the cathedral, complained as amounting to eleven thousand marks for his share,* is a proof

* £22,000. of modern money in weight; and when compared with the rate of living in that age, equal in value to above £100,000. at the present day.

both of the riches of the church, and of the vast booty acquired by the soldiers.*

Louis, in the mean while, was again vigorously pushing forward the siege of Dover; but the destruction of his army at Lincoln obliged him to alter his measures, and make a precipitate retreat to London. His first care was to send an express to his father, to inform him of his situation, and to solicit speedy and adequate supplies. The Pope, at the same time, threatened to excommunicate the French monarch, and lay his kingdom under an interdict, if he sent any succours to his son. Philip Augustus, finding his circumstances to be such as obliged him to avoid a rupture with the holy see, pretended that he would not any more interpose in his son's concerns; but the artful monarch so ordered matters, that Blanch, his daughter-in-law, got ready a body of troops, with transports to carry them to England. Had this armament arrived in safety, its operations might have repaired the loss sustained at the battle of Lincoln. But the scale of fortune was now turned against Louis. The French fleet was attacked in the channel by the English, who captured or sunk the greatest part of the

* Vide Rapin, with Tindal's notes, l. p. 298.

vessels.* Disaster thus succeeding disaster, Louis had the mortification of seeing himself deserted by many of the barons. In the hour of his prosperity they defied the censures of the Pope; but when his fortune began to decline, they began to feel or to feign some scruples in following the standard of an excommunicated prince.

The regent having now reduced almost the whole kingdom, advanced to the metropolis, which he immediately invested. The affairs of Louis were now coming to a crisis. He saw himself closely besieged in London,† without any hope of succours from France, a situation which convinced him that it was necessary to think of retiring. In this view he made proposals of peace to the regent, intimating that he was willing to evacuate England, on the honourable conditions of an unmolested retreat, and assurance of a general pardon to the barons of his party and to the citizens of London, who had invariably adhered to his interest. The earl of Pembroke saw the expediency of getting rid of so formidable an enemy, and instantly acquiesced in his demands as the only means of restoring the public tranquillity, and of establishing the young monarch on the throne. As soon

* M. Paris, p. 298.

† M. Paris, p. 298.

as the treaty was concluded, Louis received absolution from the legate, and having eva-

This treaty was concluded Sept. 11, A. D. 1217. cuated London, embarked with his army, and returned to France.

Thus ended a bloody and most destructive war, which threatened to bring England under the dominion of France, and not only shook the throne to its foundations, but reduced the kingdom to a scene of desolation, and inflicted inexpressible calamities on the people. Soon after the departure of the French prince, young Henry entered London, and bound himself by a solemn oath to maintain the national privileges. The vanquished barons, therefore, gained more by the accommodation than they could have expected from a victory which must have brought them into subjection to a foreign power. The king of Scotland, and Lewellin, prince of Wales, both of whom had adhered to Louis, were included in the treaty, and as well as the English barons received absolution. But the interests of the clergy were no further consulted than as they regarded their lay fees: in their ecclesiastical affairs they were left to the mercy of the Pope, whom they had offended in the most sensible part. The regent deeming it highly imprudent to quarrel with the holy see, in the beginning of a reign

when the fidelity of the subjects was wavering, and the king a minor, abandoned the ecclesiastics to the papal resentment; and the legate instituted a rigorous inquiry relative to those who had contemned the interdict. All that were found guilty were immediately suspended, and reduced to the alternative of being deprived of their benefices, or repairing their fault by the payment of considerable sums of money. The bishop of Lincoln paid a thousand marks to the Pope, and a hundred to the legate, and many other ecclesiastics being compelled to make similar sacrifices, his Holiness reaped a plentiful harvest.* In all the contests of those ages the Popes were generally concerned, and whoever were the losers, they managed so well their affairs that they were almost invariably gainers.†

This memorable contest affords the philosophical reader of history, an opportunity of observing a most striking and complicated mixture of political and religious machination. John offends the Pope, and is excommunicated. His barons make a scruple of conscience to obey an excommunicated

* M. Paris, p. 299.

† Innocent III. died A. D. 1217, after his ambition had, during the space of nineteen years, convulsed all Europe. The Presid. Henault places his death in 1216. Ab. Chron.

prince. The Pope gives the kingdom of England to Philip Augustus. Philip makes ready to execute the papal commission ; but John humbles himself and consents to hold his kingdom as a vassal of Rome. His Holiness then forbids Philip to attempt any thing against England. Philip, who was so ready to comply with the pontifical mandate while it gave him a kingdom, refused his obedience when it forbade him to invade his neighbour's dominions. After this the English barons quarrel with their sovereign, and in their turn are excommunicated. But they who revered the censure when fulminated against their monarch, disregard it when lanced against themselves, and militating against their interests. They offer the crown of England to the son of Philip Augustus ; and Louis, on going to take possession of his new kingdom, incurs the sentence of excommunication. The French prince, however, contemns the fulminations of the holy see ; and so long as his arms are successful, his adherents disregard the papal anathema ; but when his fortune had changed and his affairs seemed desperate, scruples of conscience began to arise in their breasts, and the thunders of Rome sounded in their ears like a celestial decree, which reprobated the cause in which

they were engaged. All history shews that the actors on the political theatre are endowed with a pliant flexibility of conscience; and new circumstances never fail to replenish their minds with new lights. Amidst these fluctuating scenes of politico-religious intrigue, this play of excommunications and anathemas, it seems that the papal authority, how venerable soever it might appear in the eyes of the vulgar, was considered by statesmen chiefly as an engine from which they might derive some advantage, or receive some annoyance; and by a judicious management of the fears and interests of mankind, it acquired its awful ascendancy.

The political abilities of the regent had established the king on his throne, and his continued exertions preserved the tranquillity of the kingdom. His first care was to provide for the fulfilment of the royal promises, in regard to the exact observance of the great charter. But within the space of little more than a year, this great man, who was equally qualified for peace or for war, died universally lamented by the whole kingdom, which his valour and prudence had preserved from a foreign domination.* Had those who suc-

* The regent, William Marshal, earl of Pembroke, died in March, 1219. M. Paris, p. 304. M. West, p. 279. Tind. notes on Rap. I. p. 299.

ceeded to his office and influence possessed the same talents and integrity, and imbued the mind of the young monarch with the same maxims, the reign of Henry would not have been marked by so many and so violent convulsions. From this period the reign of Henry III. presents a perplexed series of events which have little connexion with each other, and appear but little interesting to a modern reader. Its whole history consists of the tyrannical and perfidious measures of the king, supported by the Pope, the discontents of the barons and clergy, ill-projected and unsuccessful wars with France, disadvantageous treaties, and all the mismanagement that can disgrace a weak monarch and a corrupt administration. A circumstantial detail of the cabals of so long a period as almost forty years, consumed amidst regal oppression and national discontent, without any brilliant transaction or splendid event to diversify such a scene of dull uniformity and to embellish the narrative, would lead to a tedious prolixity, equally incompatible with the plan of this compendium, and tiresome to the reader. But however uninteresting the particulars may seem, the result is of the utmost importance. The continual jarrings of different parties laid the foundation of public

freedom, and by a remarkable combination of circumstances, this reign, although one of the most oppressive that England has seen, is distinguished as the era from which the English people must date the foundation of their political constitution.

The first part of the reign of Henry was disturbed by the revolt of some of his turbulent barons, a circumstance of so frequent recurrence in the feudal ages, as scarcely to be worthy of modern attention. The king being declared by the parliament of full age to assume the reins of government, the first act of his administration indicated the rapacity of his disposition. Having recently obtained considerable sums from the parliament, he durst not solicit new aids. But he bethought himself of an expedient which had been used by Richard I. when preparing for his memorable croisade, without considering that he possessed none of those brilliant qualities by which that monarch was distinguished, and his influence established. In imitation of his predecessor, he issued an order for the renewal of all charters, for which a certain sum was to be paid. By this means he for once filled his coffers; but he lost the affections of a great number of his subjects, and gave to the rest sufficient cause of alarm.

As the king advanced in age, he discovered qualities wholly inconsistent with the character of a great prince: his avarice, his unsteadiness and caprice, his propensity to be governed by favourites, and, above all, his love of arbitrary power, afforded no flattering prospect to his subjects. His principal minister, Hubert de Burgh, the justiciary, who had signalized himself by his gallant defence of Dover, was rather a military than a political genius, and promoted the arbitrary measures of the monarch; but he appears not to have been able to inspire him with the love of arms. The disorders which took place in France during the regency of Blanch, the mother of St. Louis, afforded him a favourable opportunity of recovering the provinces which the English had formerly possessed in that country. The pressing invitations of the archbishop of Bourdeaux, however, could not rouse him to make the attempt. But by a strange absurdity of conduct, after most
A. D. 1228. of the revolted barons of France were reduced to obedience, and the count of Bretagne only remained in arms, Henry began to make vast preparations for an expedition, which, had it been undertaken nine months sooner, could scarcely have failed of success. Having summoned all the vassals of the crown to meet him at Portsmouth, he assembled

one of the finest armies that had ever been raised in England. But through the negligence or treachery of his minister, Hubert de Burgh, a sufficient number of transports was not provided.* The king accused him of treason, and would have run him through with his sword, had not the earl of Chester interposed. But notwithstanding this positive charge, the capricious monarch took the justiciary again into favour. The season for action was lost, and the embarkation of the troops could not take place till spring.

Henry took care to convert the delay of his expedition to his pecuniary advantage. He procured a considerable present from the clergy, exacted a large sum from the city of London; and compelled the Jews, who were then very numerous in England, to give him one-third of their property. This money was lavished by the king in idle expences. He passed over into France, but his conduct shewed his unfitness for war. After
May 3d,
A. D. 1229. taking a castle in Poitou, he retired into Bretagne, where he squandered his

* The justiciary was said to have received from the queen regent of France a bribe of 5,000 marks. M. Paris, p. 363. The French historians call him Robert de Burgh; and the Presid. Henault says, that he was reported to have been bribed by the queen regent. Ab. Chron. ad An. 1228.

money in entertainments and diversions. All discipline was laid aside in the army: the earls and barons consumed their whole time in feasting and carousing, and the soldiers sold their horses and arms in order to procure money to spend.* Henry and his troops were thus ingloriously employed, when intelligence arrived that the army of the queen regent of France was approaching. Nothing more was requisite to determine his measures. Leaving a part of his army under the command of the earls of Chester and Pembroke, to support the Count de Bretagne, he retired to England, and landed at Portsmouth on the 26th October, after an inactive but most expensive campaign.

Although the king had thus lavished the money which had been granted for carrying on the war, he made this disgraceful expedition a pretext for demanding fresh supplies; and the parliament, with great reluctance, complied with his requisition. After this, he marched against Lewellin, prince of North Wales, but performed no more than in his expedition to France. In the course
A. D. 1231. of the following year, Hubert de Burgh was disgraced in consequence of the

* M. Paris, p. 367.

suggestion of the bishop of Winchester, who accused him of heinous crimes against the state. The justiciary was summoned to trial before his peers; but conscious of guilt, or knowing that many of his judges were his professed enemies, instead of appearing he took sanctuary in the priory of Merton. On leaving this sacred asylum, he was pursued and again took refuge in a small chapel, from whence he was dragged and conducted in chains to the Tower of London. All churches, with whatever appertained to them, being in that age regarded as sanctuaries, this violation alarmed the whole body of the clergy; and the bishop of London declared to the king his resolution of excommunicating all persons who were concerned in this sacrilegious transaction. The king being terrified with those threats, ordered Hubert to be re-conducted to his sanctuary, but to be so strictly guarded as to render it impossible that he should either escape or receive any victuals. This desperate situation obliged the justiciary to surrender himself to the sheriffs, who carried him to the Tower, loaded with chains, amidst the shouts and insults of the populace. But the fickleness and avarice of Henry disappointed the expectation of the numerous enemies of the fallen minister. A

large sum of money which Hubert put into his hands, moderated his anger; and he not only ceased from any further prosecution, but permitted him to retain a great part of his estates.

The bishop of Winchester succeeded to the administration, and it might have been expected that the downfall of Hubert would have been to him an awful memento, and have operated as a check on his conduct. The effect, however, was precisely the contrary. He aimed directly at arbitrary power; and representing to the king that the greatest part of the barons were disaffected to his government, and aspiring to independence, he easily persuaded him to invite over a number of foreigners, on whose assistance he might at all times rely. This counsel was immediately put in practice, and in a little time two thousand knights arrived from Gascony and Poitou. These strangers were not only promoted to the most considerable offices, but had also the wardships of the young nobility, by which means they procured for one another the most advantageous matches. The tendency of these proceedings, to bring all the principal estates of the kingdom into the hands of foreigners, was too evident not to be perceived by the barons; and the earl

of Pembroke, in the name of the whole body, presented a remonstrance to the king, declaring that if he continued to give this decided preference to foreigners, they should be obliged to seek means to expel them from the kingdom. The bishop of Winchester did not give the king time to reply, but told the earl that his insolence merited correction, and that if the foreigners already in the country were not sufficient to overawe the turbulent barons, a still greater number should be introduced from France. From this period the barons began to withdraw from court, and to form a confederacy against the despotism which the king and his minister were seeking to establish. But the want of union disconcerted their plans, and left the most active leaders exposed to royal and ministerial vengeance. Of these the earl of Pembroke was the most obnoxious, and was accordingly made the first victim. His houses and parks were destroyed, and his estates were pillaged. Several others were treated in a similar manner; and the spoils were distributed among the Poitevins and Gascons. The earl retired into North Wales, where he obtained assistance from Llewellyn, the prince of that country, and for some time carried on a desultory war, in which he and his ad-

herents, among whom was the famous Hubert de Burgh, made it a rule to pillage no estates but those of the king's counsellors. At length being obliged to pass over into Ireland to oppose the ravages which the bishop of Winchester had ordered to be made on his estates, he was treacherously slain in a battle by his pretended friends, in consequence of a deep-laid scheme of that prelate.

Soon after this event an important revolution took place in the court. The archbishop of Canterbury had long solicited the king to dismiss his foreign ministers. He represented, in so forcible a manner, the pernicious consequences that must certainly ensue from persisting in such measures as alienated the affections of his subjects, that he succeeded at length in opening the eyes of the monarch, who seemed disposed to reform his conduct. The first effects of this change was the dismissal of the ministers, with orders to give an account of their administration. Consciousness of their guilt induced them to take sanctuary in the churches: and by a successful application to the avarice of Henry, they were screened from punishment on paying considerable sums of money.

Pecuniary supplies and unlimited power, indeed, were the chief, or rather the only

objects that Henry ever had in his view. By extravagant and useless expences, money was squandered as quickly as it was collected, and when one means of extorting it from his subjects was exhausted, another supplied its place. Conscious of the need which he might have of the assistance of Rome, he entered into a close connexion with the holy see; and under the pious pretext of an expedition to Palestine, he demanded of the clergy one-tenth of their revenues for the space of three years. Although the requisition was supported by an order from the Pope, the bishops and abbots refused to comply, and upbraided him in very strong terms with his extortions, his tyranny, and his repeated violations of promises and oaths. The nobles were not less refractory than the clergy; and the citizens of London still more than the rest of the kingdom, were incensed against the king, by reason of his frequent exactions, and violations of their privileges.

Henry, in the mean while, instead of taking warning by the fate of his unfortunate father, followed his example in alienating the affections of the barons. Continually beset by greedy foreigners, he was always poor, while his courtiers and ministers enriched themselves at his expence and that of

his subjects. Mansel, a clergyman, one of his favourites, enjoyed no less than seven hundred ecclesiastical benefices, which brought him an annual revenue of four thousand marks, equal to eight thousand pounds of our present money; and considered in proportion to relative value, worth above fifty thousand pounds in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The bishop of Lincoln caused an accurate account to be taken of the annual income of all the foreigners in England, and it was found to amount to above seventy thousand marks, which, at that period, was three times as much as the revenues of the crown.

A. D. 1253.
This attachment to foreigners, and the reluctance with which the English granted money, excited the greatest animosity between the king and his subjects. The following year, however, he renewed his application to parliament, under the old pretext of preparing for an expedition to the Holy Land. Although the barons and clergy knew that Henry had no intention of leading an army to Jerusalem, yet, on certain conditions, they agreed to grant him, for three years, the tenths of the ecclesiastical revenues, and three marks for every knight's fee held immediately of the crown.

The promise of the king was confirmed by an oath, accompanied by ceremonies the most solemn and impressive. In the great hall of the palace of Westminster, where all the lords, both spiritual and temporal, were assembled with lighted tapers in their hands, the archbishop of Canterbury, standing up before the king and the barons, denounced a dreadful curse against those who, for the future, should oppose the observance of the charters, or in any way violate or alter the laws and constitution of the kingdom. After this, the charters were read, and the king, who, during the ceremony, held his hand on his breast, confirmed them by the following oath: "So may God help me as I inviolably observe all these things as I am a man—as I am a christian—as I am a knight—as I am a crowned and anointed king!" After Henry had thus engaged both his honour and his conscience, every one threw his taper on the ground, saying, "May those who violate the charters thus smoke in hell!"*. To a scrupulous conscience so solemn and sacred an engagement might have been binding; but tyrants and parasites regard oaths as mere trifles; and Henry, following the pernicious

* M. Paris, p. 897.

counsels of his favourites, soon trampled upon the obligations of honour and religion.

The money granted by the parliament for the expedition to the Holy Land, was found useful in reducing the rebels of Guienne, who had been supported by the king of Castile. This war was readily terminated by a marriage between prince Edward, the eldest son of Henry, and Eleonora, sister of Alphonso. The usual prodigality of the king having rendered this trifling expedition astonishingly expensive, he carefully concealed the treaty in order to draw more money from his subjects. But the news of its conclusion soon reached England, and the parliament, which had been convoked by the queen, refused to grant a fresh subsidy. Henry dared not, at this time, press the affair; but he extorted vast sums from the Jews, and from the city of London.* A new pretext, however, was devised by the Pope and the king, in order to drain England of its money.

During the long wars between the Popes and the emperors, the kingdom of Naples and Sicily had been a grand object of contest. After a long dispute, and various revolutions,

* M. Paris, p. 913.

which have no connexion with English history, Innocent IV. finding himself unable to make an effectual resistance against the arms of the emperor Conrad, had offered the crown of the two Sicilies to Richard, the brother of Henry, king of England. But the conditions on which Richard proposed to accept of that kingdom not being agreeable to the Pope, the latter, after continuing the war for some time at his own expence, and with little success, had recourse again to the king of England, and offered to place on the head of Edmund, his second son, the crown of Naples and Sicily. Henry accepted, with thankfulness, the imaginary present ; and being now more closely than ever connected with the Pope, he supported, with zeal, all his extortions. He sent to Rome all the money that he had, or was able to borrow, besides vast sums which he extorted from the Jews, and his other subjects, by means of itinerant commissioners sent into every county. He also engaged to pay all the money that the Pope should be able to borrow ; and the discharge of these debts, real or pretended, obliged him to have recourse to such exactions as rendered him daily more odious to his subjects. In the mean while, the old pretext of an expedition to the Holy Land, was used by the Pope to

grant Henry 2-tenths upon the income of the clergy. Thus the Pope and the king acted in concert to exhaust and impoverish the realm.

While these things were transacting in England, Manfred, the bastard, defeated the papal army in Naples; and Innocent IV. dying soon after, historians have imagined, that his grief, on account of this disaster, was the cause of his death. His successor, Alexander IV. resolving to prosecute his designs, and borrowing money from every quarter on the account of the king of England, collected an army of sixty thousand men to carry on the war in Naples. This formidable force was totally defeated by Manfred, who now began to discover his designs. He had hitherto professed to act for Conradin, son of the late emperor Conrad; but, after this victory, he openly aspired to the crown. The papal forces being obliged to abandon the country, Manfred soon became master both of Naples and Sicily, and was crowned at Palermo. The Pope, still hoping to retrieve his affairs by the assistance of England, sent to London the bishop of Bononia, who, without mentioning the coronation of Manfred, amused Henry with the solemn farce of investing prince Edmund with the kingdom of the two Sicilies.

It was now easy to perceive, that the king was engaged in an affair which would require all the money in England for its accomplishment ; and he could not expect any liberal assistance from subjects to whom his government had long been so odious. His former profusion to his favourites, and the sums that were borrowed for the affair of Sicily, had involved Henry so deeply in debt, that he saw it impossible to satisfy his creditors ; and his repeated applications to parliament for supplies, were answered by positive refusals. Finding himself unable to obtain money by his own power and credit, he had no other resource than the authority of the Pope, who was ever ready to lend him his aid. Alexander IV. surpassed all his predecessors in the arts of acquisition. He sent Rustand, his nuncio, into England, furnished with several bulls, one of which absolved the king from his vow of conducting an army to the Holy Land, on condition that he should undertake the conquest of Sicily, which the Pope represented as more important to the interests of christianity than that of Jerusalem ; and the others empowered him to extort money from the clergy, under pretence of the necessity of carrying forward that great undertaking.

The Pope and the king now put in practise every expedient that a profligate policy could devise for draining the kingdom of its money. But the clergy were, on this occasion, singled out as the principal, or, at least, the primary victims. It was well known that they possessed the greatest quantity of ready cash; and it was supposed that they would be overawed by the Pope more easily than the barons could be brought to submit to the king. If the means of extortion used on this occasion were not minutely detailed by a cotemporary historian of unquestionable credit, and who had every opportunity of accurate information, the relation could not claim the belief of posterity.* Obligatory notes were drawn, by which each bishop, abbot, and prior, acknowledged to have borrowed of some merchant, in Italy, a certain sum of money for the use of his church, and bound himself to repay it at a time appointed. The particular sums were not specified; but a blank was left for that purpose to be filled up by

* Matthew Paris, who, in the 2d vol. of his history has given a circumstantial account of these transactions, was a Benedictine monk of St. Alban's, and one of the greatest ornaments of the 13th century. His history is highly esteemed for its bold impartiality, and the excellence of its Latin stile. He died A. D. 1259; but his history was continued till the death of Henry III. by another monk of the same monastery.

the Pope or his legate; and every endeavour was used to compel the ecclesiastics to sign these obligations.*

In order to carry into execution this singular contrivance, Rustand, the legate, convened the prelates and abbots, and required, in the name of the Pope, that each of them should sign one of these notes, under pain of excommunication. They were all astonished at this proposal; and the bishop of London declared that he would lose his life rather than submit to so flagrant an oppression. He was seconded by the bishop of Worcester; and the whole body of the clergy declared that they would not be the slaves of the Pope. The bishop of London was considered by the legate as the cause of their disobedience, and was threatened with all the effects of papal and regal indignation. To these menaces the prelate boldly replied, that "he knew the Pope and the king to be more powerful than he, but that if his mitre were taken from him, a helmet should soon occupy its place." This firmness, however, did not cause the nuncio to desist from his project. The attack, which had proved unsuccessful

* M. Paris says the blanks were filled up with the sums of five, six, or seven hundred marks. P. 910, &c.

against the whole body, was renewed against individuals. Some of them he caressed : others he frightened : against many he brought charges, which he used as a pretext for their excommunication, and if they did not, within forty days, submit to the will of the Pope, their revenues were confiscated.

But the sums which the Pope and the king could exact from individuals, were far from being sufficient for the occasion. The whole ecclesiastical body was, therefore, again convened, and Rustand insisted on the signature of the notes. The prelates and abbots peremptorily refused to comply, declaring, that the papal requisition was contrary both to reason and justice. The nuncio asserted that there was no injustice in the case ; and that, as all churches belonged to the Pope, he might dispose of their revenues in what manner he pleased. The clergy replied, that, although all churches might, in one sense, be said to belong to the Pope, it was only that he should protect and defend them, and not that he should appropriate their revenues to his own use ; and they unanimously declared their final resolution, that, rather than submit to these exactions, they were all ready to suffer death like the blessed martyr, St. Thomas, of Canterbury.

The nuncio finding that the bishops and abbots were not to be intimidated by menaces, began to change the mode of attack. Instead of pressing any further the signature of the notes, he demanded of the Cistercian monasteries a year's revenue of their wool, to supply the wants of the Pope and the king.* But on this subject, as well as on the former, he met with a positive refusal. The Pope being informed of these transactions, began to proceed with a more deliberate caution, and instead of attempting every thing at once, sent into England a succession of bulls, all of which had the same tendency to drain the purses of the clergy. The king, on his side, was not less active in procuring money. He continued his exactions not only on the citizens of London, but also on the whole kingdom.†

In perusing the history of this rapacious and blood-sucking reign, posterity must be

* To complete the impoverishment of England, Richard, the king's brother, was, by a party of the German princes, elected king of the Romans. This prince is said to have carried out of England no less than £700,000. sterling, from which he derived no other advantage than that of being crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle, and afterwards found himself under the necessity of leaving Germany.

† The same exactions were practised on the vassal princes of Wales, until their patience being wearied out, they flew to arms, and ravaged the English borders. Prince Edward being sent against them was obliged to retire with some loss, and the king having taken the command in person, lost the greatest part of his army. Rapin, l. p. 331 and 332.

astonished that the high-spirited barons of England, whose turbulence had so frequently convulsed the kingdom and shaken the throne, should, during the long period of almost thirty years, have borne the tyranny, the perfidy, and the caprice, of so weak and pusillanimous a prince as Henry III. whose government was so odious to all classes of his subjects. It is difficult to assign a reason for this extraordinary degree of forbearance, unless we suppose that the melancholy remembrance of the devastations caused by the civil war in the reign of John, inclined them to submit to almost any oppressions, rather than hazard the repetition of such horrible scenes. There is, however, an ultimate point beyond which tyranny cannot be carried without meeting opposition. The patience of the barons, as well as of the clergy, was at length exhausted; and they formed a general confederacy for the purpose of reforming the government, and excluding the foreigners from all public offices, which they had for a long time monopolized.

A. D. 1258. The parliament being convened, the king, as usual, opened the session by a demand of money. But the barons, instead of complying with his requisition, vehemently upbraided him with his repeated breaches of promise, and his mal-administra-

tion. The king, perceiving by their determined language that they were not to be dealt with by violence, had recourse to his former arts, and acknowledging his errors, promised to reform whatever was amiss. But he had already exhausted their credulity. They plainly told him that they were no longer to be deceived by his assurances, and that, without leaving it to him, they themselves intended to reform the government in such a manner as no more to fear his perfidy. The king found himself unable to oppose their unanimous resolution, and reluctantly signed a charter, by which he consented that articles of reform should be drawn up by twenty-four lords, of whom he should choose twelve, and promised to observe whatever should be determined by these commissioners. The charter was also signed by prince Edward, in order to give it an additional sanction; and the parliament being prorogued, the next session was appointed to be held at the city of Oxford, where every thing was to be ultimately adjusted. The barons having been so often deceived by the king's protestations, summoned all their military tenants, and came to Oxford so well attended, as not to fear any violence. The first business was the election of the twenty-four

commissioners, of whom twelve were chosen by the king, and the rest by the barons, who appointed as president of the council Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, brother-in-law to the king, a man whose eminent abilities and enterprising genius qualified him for the boldest undertakings. The twenty-four commissioners then drew up articles of reform, the principal of which were, that the charters should be confirmed; that the officers of state and public ministers should be appointed by the twenty-four commissioners, who should also have the custody of all the king's castles; that the penalty of death should be inflicted on all persons, of whatever rank they might be, who should directly or indirectly oppose what this supreme council should ordain; and that once, at least, every year, the parliament should meet to enact laws for the welfare of the kingdom.*

Thus did Henry, by overstretching his power, find himself at length obliged to resign the government into the hands of his subjects. The regulations made on this occasion were entitled the Provisions of Oxford;

* Some historians are of opinion that the commons were summoned to this parliament; but it appears to be a mistake. Vide Rapin, l. p. 333.

and measures were immediately taken for carrying them into execution. They met with great opposition from the princes of the royal family and the foreigners, but especially from the relatives of the queen.* Hobry, the son of Richard, king of the Romans, protested against them as being of no force till they had received the approbation of his father, who was then in Germany; and the bishop of Valence, who was a foreigner, positively refused to deliver up his castles. To the former, the earl of Leicester declared that if the king of the Romans would not join with the barons, he should not possess one foot of land in England; and to the latter that he should part either with his castles or his head. The foreigners, intimidated by this menace, instantly retired and shut themselves up in Winchester. They were pursued by the barons, and being closely besieged, were glad to capitulate, on condition of being permitted to leave the kingdom.

The next step taken by the barons was to dispatch letters to the Pope, in order to justify their proceedings. His Holiness was highly dissatisfied with a revolution which tended

* She was the daughter of Raymond, count of Provence, and was married to Henry on the 14th Jan. 1236. M. Paris, p. 430.

to check the flow of English money to Rome. To enter on a contest with a whole nation, however, required some caution. The Pope, therefore, contented himself with delaying to transmit an answer to the barons, and with privately assuring the king of his holy protection. After a series of dark intrigues, Henry resolved to throw off the yoke of the barons. The Pope having absolved him from his oath, he openly declared his intentions, and retiring to the Tower, the governor of which he had gained, he seized on the treasure there deposited, and issued a proclamation for the dismissal of all the officers and magistrates chosen by the twenty-four, and for appointing others in their place. Both parties now directed their views towards prince Edward, who was then gone to Paris to be present at a tournament. The king expected his sanction to his measures, and his assistance in the execution, while the barons hoped that the prudence of the young prince would have such influence on his father, as to prevent the evils with which the kingdom was menaced. On his return, he blamed the king for violating his oath, and openly espoused the cause of the barons. Henry, astonished at being abandoned by his son, was willing to enter into a negotiation; but having unadvisedly pro-

duced the papal bull which absolved him from his oath, the barons clearly perceived that treaties were useless with a prince who could not be bound by the most sacred engagements. Resolving, therefore, to lay aside all ceremony, they formed a plan for seizing the king, who being apprized of their design, again retired to the Tower, from whence he sent orders into the different counties for the removal of the sheriffs appointed by the baronial council, a measure which threw the whole kingdom into confusion. For although the power of the king seemed to be annihilated, yet the regal name, supported by papal authority, retained a considerable influence over public opinion.

Every thing now seemed to threaten a civil war, and the barons prevailed with the governors of the cinque ports to equip a fleet, in order to prevent the king from receiving any foreign succours. The mutual fears of the two parties, however, suspended their mutual enmity; and through the mediation of the king of the Romans, a treaty was concluded on terms which appeared so advantageous to Henry, that the earl of Leicester judged it expedient to leave the kingdom and retire into France. Many of the other lords, although they had signed the treaty, were not

less dissatisfied ; but the measure had been determined by the majority. The accommodation therefore was only temporary, and the embers of civil discord soon broke out into an open flame.

A.D. 1262. The king having made a voyage to Guienne, his absence afforded to the friends of Leicester an opportunity of recruiting the baronial party, which had been divided by the late accommodation. The king, in the mean while, resolving to break his agreement, had gained to his party his brother Richard, king of the Romans, as well as prince Edward. On the return of the king the barons presented an address, complaining of various grievances, and were surprised at his answer, which branded them with the opprobrious names of traitors and rebels. But a body of foreigners, which prince Edward had raised under the pretext of repelling the incursions of the Welsh, inspired Henry with confidence thus openly to defy the power of the barons. A train of negotiations commenced, but without any pacific effects. The lords at length resolved to try the fortune of arms, and chose the earl of Leicester for their general, who plundered the houses, and desolated the estates of the king's favourites and counsellors. He soon became master of

Gloucester, Hereford, Bridgenorth, and Worcester; and the city of London declared in his favour, while the king, unable to oppose the baronial forces, remained shut up in the Tower, expecting prince Edward to come to his relief. But the barons having taken such a position as prevented the prince from approaching the capital, Henry again had recourse to negotiation. Two successive treaties were concluded, and almost immediately violated. Both sides then prepared for war; but the Londoners being greatly annoyed by the garrison in the Tower; and the king having a strong party in the city, the earl of Leicester resolved, if possible, to enter London, in order to secure the baronial interest in the metropolis.—Marching through Surrey, he reached the banks of the Thames, in hopes that Thomas Fitz-Richard, the mayor, and the rest of his friends, would be able to open the bridge gates. In this expectation he made a vigorous attack on the king, who, being apprized of his march, had left the Tower, and posted himself in the borough of Southwark. But here he found himself involved in an unforeseen difficulty. Relying on the aid of the Londoners, he had brought only a small body of troops; and during the fight some citizens

of the king's party locked up the bridge gates, and threw the keys into the river. At length, however, the Londoners burst open the gates, and sallying out in great multitudes, the king was forced to retire, and the earl entered the city.

A. D. 1304.

The advantage gained by the barons was productive of the usual effects. The king made proposals for an accommodation; and the differences were referred to the arbitration of the French monarch, St. Louis, whose reputation for justice and sanctity seemed to entitle him to the confidence of both parties. In this decision, his notions of equity, or his estimate of kingly authority, did not coincide with those of the English nobles. He gave sentence, on every contested point, entirely in favour of Henry: the barons refused to abide by his award; and hostilities were in consequence renewed. The king, at first, gained several considerable advantages. He reduced Oxford, Northampton, and Nottingham; and afterwards returned into Kent, where he forced the barons to abandon the siege of Rochester, and to retreat to London. Flashed with these successes, he marched directly to the metropolis, not doubting of its ready submission. But the earl of Leicester had

gained such influence over the citizens, that, on the approach of the king, he persuaded them to issue out, and offer him battle. Henry, not expecting such a reception, and being unwilling to hazard an engagement with the Londoners at their own gates, immediately retired, and encamped at Lewes, in Sussex.

The earl of Leicester having strengthened his army with fifteen thousand Londoners, marched out of the city, and advancing towards Lewes, encamped about six miles from the royal army. Here the confederate barons, though, perhaps, with no other design than to exculpate themselves from the imputation of the war, made new proposals for an accommodation. Although their letter to the king was couched in the most respectful terms, their proposals were rejected; and the answer which they received breathed nothing but threats and defiance.* It is more than probable that the barons were pleased with so fair a pretext for pushing things to extremity; and they accordingly renounced their fealty, and declared the king an enemy to the state.

Nothing now remained but to decide the contest by the sword. The earl of Leicester

* M. Westminster, p. 386.

advanced, and drew up his army in order of battle near the king, who was ready to receive him. The right wing of the royal army was commanded by prince Edward: the left by the king of the Romans; and Henry, in person, led the main body. The army of the barons was divided into four bodies:—the first was conducted by Henry de Montfort, son of the general: the second by the earl of Gloucester: the earl of Leicester, himself, commanded the third; and Nicholas Seagrave led on the last, which consisted entirely of Londoners. Prince Edward began the

May 14th,
A. D. 1264.

battle by attacking this body, which, being unable to sustain his furious charge, was soon put to flight. The prince pursued the Londoners more than four miles without giving quarter; but his vindictive imprudence proved fatal to the royal army. While he was pursuing his advantage with greater ardour than discretion, the barons expecting no mercy in case they were vanquished, made a desperate attack on the king's troops, who, after a faint resistance, consulted their safety by flight. Henry and Richard were both taken prisoners, and conducted to Lewes. Prince Edward returning from the pursuit of the Londoners, was surprised to find the army dispersed, and his

father and uncle made prisoners. His first intention was to make a last effort for changing the fate of the day by a vigorous attack on the conquerors ; but his soldiers being discouraged, could not be brought to renew the battle ; and the prince being at length surrounded by the baronial army, was obliged to capitulate on condition that he, and his uncle Richard, should remain as hostages for the due observance of the Provisions of Oxford. About five thousand men fell on both sides in this conflict ; but the battle of Lewes is chiefly memorable for the important change which it effected in the English constitution.

In exhibiting a view of this long and disgusting reign, it has been necessary to omit, or slightly glance over those private or partial disputes, and those numerous and complicated intrigues, which, during so long a period of time, took place among discontented nobles and interested ministers, but which do not merit the attention of posterity. The principal object has been to trace the series of events which have led to the present constitution of parliament, and ushered in the blessings of English liberty. Every thing of this nature appears with the aspect of national importance. But in order to form a clear and compre-

hensive idea of a subject in which every Englishman is so deeply concerned, it is requisite to observe that, during the space of nearly two centuries, which had elapsed since the conquest, considerable changes had gradually taken place in the social system. The number of great barons or vassals of the crown, exclusive of those in the three northern counties, was about six hundred and five; of whom about a hundred and forty were ecclesiastics. But the number of baronies amounted to about one thousand four hundred and sixty-two, as some of the barons were possessed of several baronies.* Every great proprietor of land had his friends and his clients, to whom he distributed knights' fees, which were held under him by the usual tenure of military service. In process of time these knights' fees were again subdivided without altering the nature of the tenure, so that every one who held a twentieth part was regarded as *Liber Homo*, or a gentleman. From this it is easy to perceive, that although the great mass of the original English continued for ages afterwards in a servile state, yet considerable numbers, especially the rela-

* Vide Domesday Book, and Millar's Hist. Eng. Govern. vol. 2. p. 86 and 87. Campbell computes the number of barons in the whole kingdom at about 700. Polk. Survey, vol. 2. p. 381.

tives of bishops, abbots, and other dignified ecclesiastics, would gradually rise into a more elevated rank in society.* The gradual increase of luxury had also a natural and invariable tendency to raise the people to wealth and importance. The eleventh and twelfth centuries are marked in history as the era from which may be traced the dawn of arts, manufactures, and commerce, in Italy, the Netherlands, and France. The communication between the English and Normans, in the reign of Edward the Confessor, which was greatly increased after the conquest, contributed to diffuse in England a taste for the elegances of the continent; and the increasing luxury of the nobles had excited a strong propensity to mortgage, dismember, and alienate their estates.† The crusades greatly contributed to these alienations.‡ The nobles, who assumed the cross, found that great sums were requisite to enable them to appear with dignity at the head of their vassals, and to defray the expences of a distant expedition. Inflamed with the romantic expectation of splendid conquests in

* Vide Campbell's Polit. Survey, vol. 2. p. 381 and 382.

† Millar's Hist. Eng. Gov. vol. 2. p. 189.

‡ Millar's Hist. Eng. Gov. *ibid.*

Asia, and by a zeal for the recovery of the holy sepulchre, which swallowed up every other consideration, they relinquished their ancient inheritances without any reluctance, and often for prices far below their value, in order to become adventurers in quest of new settlements in unknown countries.* But the alienations made by the croisees, seldom or never fell into the hands of the Commons. The mortgagees or the purchasers were mostly the monarchs or the clergy, and consequently these transactions contributed to enrich the church and the crown, rather than to exalt the people. Many of the barons perished in those distant wars, and often dying without heirs, their fiefs reverted to the crown: many estates had also been forfeited in the different civil wars and rebellions. In process of time a considerable part of the lands in the kingdom, had, by reversions, forfeitures, &c. passed through the hands of the king, and been distributed in smaller portions amongst a greater number of proprietors.† While these changes were gradually taking place in the landed interest, the erection of boroughs or corporations laid the foundation of popular

* Robertson's Hist. Charles V. vol. 1. p. 32. This remark is applicable to the other countries of Europe as well as England.

† Millar's Hist. Eng. Gov. vol. 2. p. 185.

freedom. In different countries, different circumstances had concurred to their formation; and their establishment had been productive of different effects. But in all the kingdoms of Europe, the monarchs had promoted the establishment of these communities as a balance to the power of the aristocracy. In Italy commercial pursuits raised them to opulence, and they soon aspired to independence.* But in England, where trade had not yet begun to flourish, they had not, till the period under consideration, acquired any weight in the state, or a voice in the national council.†

From the time of the conquest, the parliament of England had consisted of the lay and ecclesiastical barons: the people were considered as of no importance in a civil or political point of view. When the Provisions of Oxford were drawn up, it is certain that twelve deputies were chosen to represent the whole community: all these, however, were barons, but some consider this as the era of the introduction of knights of the shire, although their number was far from allowing

* For the rise and progress of the Italian cities. Vide Muratori. *Antiq. Ital.* Tom. 4. p. 159, 163, &c.

† Dr. Robertson observes that the English cities were very inconsiderable in the twelfth century. *Hist. Ch.* V. vol. 1, note 18, p. 317.

one to each county. A politico-historical writer of eminence, thinks that the election of county members was first established by custom, and afterwards sanctioned by royal authority. He supposes that the small barons finding themselves ill able to appear with dignity during their attendance on parliament, were under the necessity either of wholly absenting themselves, or of delegating some of their number, at the common expence, to represent the whole body: that this kind of election having become customary, at length became regular, as the kings always wished to counterbalance the power of the great barons; and that these deputies, under the name of knights of the shire, were introduced into parliament in the reign of Henry III.* But if the time and the manner of introducing county members be involved in a considerable degree of obscurity, the introduction of deputies from the boroughs stands in a more luminous point of view. By his victory at Lewes, the earl of Leicester had gotten most of the royal family into his power; and, in the name of Henry, he governed the kingdom. The barons and clergy, having so far gained their point, took every

* Miller's Hist. Eng. Gov. vol. 2. p. 198.

measure that the most refined policy could suggest to make the best of their advantages; and as no composition could safely be made, they resolved entirely to new-model the constitution. At this period must be fixed the origin of English liberty. The pretended privileges of the barons, the bishops, and abbots, were no better than various modes of usurpation. Till this time the common and indefeasible rights of mankind had been wholly disregarded and trampled underfoot; and the people, like cattle, had been led on to slaughter without being allowed any share in the rewards of victory. But the barons and ecclesiastics, in dethroning a king who was under the papal protection, could not justify their conduct on the political or religious principles of the times. They therefore called in a power which had been for many ages unknown: namely that of the people. A parliament was called, and the barons obliged the king to issue orders, that four knights of the shire should be sent from each county to represent the whole landed interest.* At its meeting various regulations were made; and a con-

A. D. 1264.

* These, however, like the twelve in the Oxford parliament, were not chosen by the counties, but nominated by the government. Tindal on Rapin, vol. 1. p. 339.

stitution was framed which left only an empty title to the king, and transferred to the barons the whole power of the government.

The Pope appointed a legate to proceed towards England; but a message from the earl of Leicester informed him that he could not be received. The legate immediately summoned the bishops to give an account of their conduct, and on their refusal fulminated the sentence of excommunication against them and the earl of Leicester, and laid the city of London under an interdict. The queen, in the mean while, was making vast preparations in France, in order to liberate the king and the princes.* For this purpose she collected such an army as, in all probability, would have conquered England, had not providence interposed.† Contrary winds continued so long that the troops could not embark, and were obliged to be disbanded on the approach of winter.

Hitherto the prosperity of the earl of Leicester's affairs had equalled, or even exceeded, his most sanguine expectations. He still kept the king in custody, and used him as

* The queen, being daughter of the count Provence, had retired to France, where the interest of her family were very powerful.

† M. Westm. p. 388.

his instrument in ruling the kingdom. But the barons soon grew jealous of his authority, and began to suspect that he aspired to the crown. The earl of Gloucester, who was one of the most discontented as well as the most powerful, fomented their suspicions, and the barons divided into opposite factions.

The earl of Leicester now found his exalted station surrounded with difficulties. He had overturned the regal authority, but he had still to contend with the factions of the barons and the power of the Pope. In this situation he deemed it expedient to widen the basis on which his authority rested, by extending the national representation, and calling on the whole body of the people to sanction his proceedings.

The histories of all ages and of all nations sufficiently shew that the leaders of revolt, notwithstanding their plausible prettexts, seldom act on principles purely patriotic. It has already been observed that the barons and clergy, in their successive struggles with the crown, had only endeavoured to secure and extend their own privileges and power, without wishing to procure any advantage to the people. Nothing but their own interest, which had need of such a support, could have induced them to give that great body a place

in the political system.* The boroughs or corporations of England had not acquired sufficient importance and strength to assert their right to a share of the legislative authority. But the circumstances of the times put into their hands a privilege which they had not so much as ventured to claim. The critical situation of the earl of Leicester induced him to summon a parliament; to which each county was ordered to send, as their representatives, two knights, and each city and borough the same number of citizens and burgesses. This, according to the best historians, is the origin of the House of Commons, the palladium of English liberty.†

The sanction given by this parliament to Leicester's proceedings, increased the earl of Gloucester's suspicions, that the aspiring chief was paving his way to the throne. Thinking it unnecessary, or even dangerous, to conceal, any longer, his sentiments, he entered into a confederacy with the lords of the borders of Wales, the avowed enemies of Leicester, and prepared for war by fortifying

* Millar observes, that "the great body of the people, disregarded and oppressed on all hands, were beholden for any privileges bestowed on them to the jealousy of their masters."—*Millar Hist. Eng. Gov.* 2. p. 80.

† Vide Spelman's *Gloss. Voce Parliam.* and Dr. Brady, vol. 1. p. 140, &c.

his castles. In the mean while the earl of Leicester carried the captive king and prince Edward about with him wherever he went; but the young prince contrived to elude the vigilance of his guards, and by the assistance of the earl of Gloucester, with whom he had concerted his plan, effected his escape. Leicester, omitted nothing that could tend to support him in his authority. He proclaimed prince Edward, the earl of Gloucester, and all their adherents, traitors and rebels, and, in the name of the king, prohibited all people from affording them any aid or assistance. Many of the barons joined the standard of the prince, who soon saw himself at the head of an army superior to that which Leicester commanded. The earl, therefore, sent orders to his son Simon to join him immediately with his troops. Simon began his march with great rapidity, but Edward being apprized of his coming, attacked him suddenly, and cut to pieces almost the whole of his little army.

Edward having obtained so important an advantage, resolved to attack the earl of Leicester before he could be informed of his son's defeat. So secret and rapid were his movements, that, on his approach, the earl supposed it to be his son who was come to his

assistance. But notwithstanding his surprise on descrying the hostile banners, he judged a retreat more dangerous than a battle, and immediately prepared to receive the attack.

A. D. 1265. Although deserted by his Welsh troops at the very first onset, the earl, by his courage and conduct, sustained, from two in the afternoon until night, all the efforts of an enemy greatly superior in numbers. At length he fell covered with wounds, as did also his son Henry; and the army being disheartened by the death of their general, the royalists gained a complete victory. Thus fell the famous Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, who, though a native of France, was chosen for their general by the barons of England, and obtained the actual government of the kingdom.* Although so zealous an opposer of the royal authority, his administration was not less arbitrary than that of the monarch whose power he had usurped, a proof, among thousands of others, that pretences of patriotism

* Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, was the son of the celebrated Simon Count de Montfort, who led the crusade against the Albigenses. Taking some disgust at the court of France, he came to try his fortune in England, where he became a great favourite with the king, and still more with his sister the countess dowager of Pembroke, whom, having first rendered pregnant, he married A. D. 1238.

are often a cloke to ambition. But if many parts of his conduct were unjustifiable, the result was beneficial. His political and military abilities were equal to his bold and enterprising genius, and his name will for ever be memorable in history as the founder of the English House of Commons, which forms so important a part of the national representation.

The victory of Evesham was rendered still more satisfactory to Edward by enabling him to liberate his royal father, whom the earl of Leicester had detained more than fourteen months in captivity.

The public opinion is directed by circumstances, and frequently passes from one extreme to another with a rapidity that would astonish a dispassionate spectator. The next parliament that met was entirely devoted to the royal interest; and readily granted to the king the confiscated estates of the rebels. Some of the confederates seeing themselves thus exposed to the effects of royal vengeance, began to provide for their own security. Simon de Montfort, son of the late earl of Leicester, and nephew of the king, perceiving his situation to be desperate, retired to the Isle of Axholme, in Lincolnshire, a place which, in that age, when embankments and drainage

were in so imperfect a state, was rendered almost inaccessible by the surrounding moorasses. Having easily put the Isle into such a state of defence, as might resist the efforts of a very superior force, great numbers of malcontents resorted daily to his standard. Prince Edward was sent against him with an army, and found a considerable difficulty in dislodging him from a position almost unassailable; but after an obstinate resistance, the malcontents were compelled to surrender, on condition that their lives and limbs should be spared; and by the intercession of the king of the Romans, Simon de Montfort obtained permission to depart the kingdom with an annual pension of four hundred pounds of silver.* Others of the malcontents, however, remained in arms. In Hampshire a considerable body of rebels was headed by Adam de Gurdon, a man of extraordinary strength and courage. Prince Edward being sent against them, attacked their camp, and leaping hastily into the trench, before his troops could follow him, found himself engaged, hand to hand, with the rebel chief, whom he brought to the ground. This display of personal prowess,

* Wikes Canon of Os. p. 74. Rapin says 500 marks, vol. 1. p. 342. Montfort afterwards turned pirate. Rapin *ibid*.

so congenial to the ideas of the times, greatly contributed to exalt the martial renown of the prince.* The castle of Kennelworth, which could not be carried by assault, surrendered after a long blockade. But the principal force of the confederates was concentrated in the Isle of Ely, which, at that time, consisted for the most part of morasses impassable to an army. In that place the fugitive malcontents, from different parts of the kingdom, and especially from the Isle of Axholme, assembled; and their forces grew so considerable, that the king marched against them in person; but on his arrival at Cambridge, he judged it expedient to wait for the return of prince Edward, who was then employed in reducing the malcontents of Yorkshire and Northumberland.

While such was the state of affairs, the earl of Gloucester, who had been so strenuous an abettor of the royal cause, and so determined an enemy of the Leicester party, perceiving that the king was again aiming at despotism, resolved to give a timely check to his proceedings. Having raised some troops on the borders of Wales, and made a league with the

* This circumstance, although related by Wikes, an Augustine monk, p. 76 of his history, has somewhat of the air of romance.

prince of that country, as well as with some of the neighbouring barons, he took the opportunity of the king's absence, and marched directly to London, where it is probable that the principal citizens were not ignorant of his designs. Having closely besieged the Tower, the garrison was soon obliged to surrender. After making himself master of the Tower, he published a manifesto, declaring that his motive for arming was to obtain reasonable terms for the malcontents, and to oblige the king to adhere to his solemn engagements. Surprised at this unexpected revolt, Henry sent pressing orders to his son to join him without delay. The prince having tranquillized the northern parts of the kingdom, marched with all possible speed towards the metropolis. Having joined their forces, the king and the prince encamped at Stratford. The esteem which prince Edward had acquired, rather than any respect for the king, considerably increased their army; but Gloucester's party, in London, pillaged Kent and Surrey, as well as the royal palace at Westminster. The earl, who had expected a general insurrection of the whole kingdom in his favour, finding that he had relied on uncertain assurances, soon was desirous of an accommodation; and, through

the intercession of the king of the Romans, he obtained a complete amnesty both for himself and the city of London. After this revolt was suppressed, prince Edward advanced to the Isle of Ely, which he rendered accessible by bridges of hurdles and boards thrown over the bogs. The rebels finding themselves destitute of all hopes of assistance, were glad to surrender on condition that life and limb should be spared, and by their reduction the troubles which, during the space of five years, had agitated the kingdom, were brought to a termination. But it was still thought necessary to chastise the Welsh prince, who had constantly aided the rebels. Edward marched into Wales, and advanced as far as Montgomery. But Llewellyn, conscious of the inferiority of his forces, obtained a peace on condition of doing homage to the crown of England, of paying thirty-two thousand marks, and of delivering up some of his castles.*

A.D. 1268. The public tranquillity being restored, prince Edward, with Henry, son of the king of the Romans,† and a great

* For a detailed account of the civil wars after the death of Leicester, vide Wikes, p. 74 to p. 83.

† Prince Henry was assassinated at Viterbo, in Italy, by Guido de Montfort, son of the earl of Leicester, in revenge for his father's death.

number of the English nobles, encouraged by the example of the son and the nephew of their monarch, took the cross, and embarked on an expedition to the Holy Land. The original plan was that the English armament should act in conjunction with that of France under St. Louis, who had also engaged in the croisade. But the French monarch having resolved to begin his operations by an expedition against Tunis, prince Edward proceeded with the English army to Palestine. His forces were not sufficiently numerous to enable him to make any great progress; but, in several bloody actions with the Mahomedans, he revived among them the memory of his great uncle Richard I. His martial fame, however, was near proving fatal to his life. An assassin having, under pretence of delivering to him some letters from the governor of Joppa, obtained a private audience, attempted to stab him to the heart. Edward, with great dexterity, warded off the blow from his body, but he received a wound in his arm. The murderer was about to repeat the blow, but prince Edward gave him so violent a kick, that he brought him down to the ground, and leaping instantly upon him, he wrested the dagger out of his hand, and killed him on the spot. The wound which he

had received was found to be extremely dangerous, as the dagger was poisoned; but the strength of his constitution, together with the skill of his surgeon, completed his cure.* But the disastrous intelligence of the death of St. Louis, and of the return of his armament to France, convinced Edward that his longer stay in the east could not be of any utility.† He therefore concluded a truce with the sultan, and prepared for his return to England. While the young prince was absent in Palestine, his father, Henry III. expired at
 Nov. 16th,
 A. D. 1272. London in the sixty-seventh year of his age, and the fifty-seventh of his reign.

The character of Henry III. is sufficiently developed in the history of his administration. The narrowness of his genius, his inconstant and capricious temper, and his proneness to be guided by interested counsellors, are conspicuous in all the transactions of his reign. His notions of arbitrary power were common to princes in a barbarous age;

* It has been related that he owed his life to his consort Eleonora, who sucked out the poison; but the fact appears not only romantic but extremely doubtful, being mentioned by no historian of that age. Tindal says it is first mentioned by Camden. Vide notes on Rapin l. p. 345.

† St. Louis, with the greatest part of his army, fell victims to the pestilence while lying before Tunis. This was the last of those romantic expeditions called the crusades.

but, in him, they were neither supported by brilliant qualities, nor tempered with discretion. Equally avaricious and prodigal, he was constantly employed in extorting money from his subjects, without ever augmenting his treasures; and his desire of establishing his despotic authority caused him, for a time, to lose his just prerogatives and his personal liberty, for the recovery of which he was indebted to the valour of his son. Among all his vices, however, he cannot be taxed with cruelty. He was generally contented with punishing rebels in their purses, when he might have caused them to expire on the scaffold; and seemed, on every occasion, more desirous of the money than the blood of his enemies. But of all the features of his character, his profuseness to his favourites, and his inconsiderate waste of money, were the most conspicuous; and his improvidence, rather than any other vice, may be considered as the source of all his misfortunes.

In exhibiting the troubles which agitated his reign, it has already been observed that the result was extremely favourable to popular freedom; but it may appear somewhat extraordinary, that, notwithstanding the impoverishment of the kingdom, in consequence of the vast sums of money extorted by the

king and the Pope, a considerable progress was made in the arts of elegance, and especially in architecture. But it must also be observed, that notwithstanding the contentious disputes between the king and the nobles, as well as between the Pope and the clergy, a long period of almost forty years elapsed without any of those destructive civil wars, which had so frequently devastated the kingdom. During this interval of tranquillity, the people of England must have considerably augmented their wealth; and perhaps the bishops and monks, who knew as well how to hold, as the Pope did to draw, complained of a poverty which they did not experience.

Whatever might, in this respect, be the state of either the church or the kingdom, the reign of Henry III. produced some of the most magnificent specimens of sacred architecture that England can boast. The origin of the highly ornamented style of architecture which has received the various appellations of Gothic, Anglo-Norman, and Saracenic, is difficult to trace; but, in the latter part of the thirteenth century, it seems to have attained its highest perfection.* Westmin-

* The term Gothic is often applied, in an indefinite sense, to the ages of ignorance, but, in defining the limits of historical periods,

ster Abbey, which, in the reign of Henry III. was taken down and rebuilt, still remains a magnificent specimen of the architectural skill of that age.

this term cannot be brought lower than the age of Charlemagne. The highly ornamented style of architecture which prevailed, with some variations, from the 13th to the 16th century, has, by some, been called Saracenic, because it appeared in Europe soon after the croisades, and seems to have admitted a variety of Arabic ornaments. The illustrious Society of Antiquaries have given it the appellation of English, because it was brought to the highest perfection in England. Its grand characteristic is striking effect, which renders it peculiarly adapted to structures consecrated to religion.

EDWARD I.



AT the death of Henry III. his son and successor, Edward I. was fighting under the banners of the cross, and acquiring military fame in the distant region of Palestine. His absence was no detriment to his succession. His prudence and valour were fresh in the memory of the English ; and they hoped that he would employ those talents in maintaining the tranquillity of the kingdom, which had suffered such violent shocks in the two preceding reigns. The assembled barons, with one accord, swore fealty to their absent monarch ; and appointed a regency to govern the kingdom until his arrival.

Edward being on his return from the east, arrived at Messina, in Sicily, before he was informed of what passed in England. From Sicily he went to Rome to visit the new Pope, Gregory X. who was his particular friend, and had accompanied him when he went to Palestine. He then proceeded on his journey

homeward through Burgundy and France; and after honouring with his presence a tournament, to which he was invited by the earl of Chalons, he went to Paris on a visit to Philip III. king of France, who gave him an honourable reception, and received his homage for Guienne. At length having finished his peregrination, he and his queen arrived in England; and on the

A. D. 1274.

19th August were crowned at Westminster. The first care of the new king, after his coronation, was to make a strict inquiry into the affairs of his kingdom, and to rectify the abuses which had crept in during the former reigns. He and his parliament enacted new laws for securing the tranquillity of the kingdom, the immunities of the church, and the privileges of the clergy.

Edward had long revolved in his mind the subjugation of Wales. That country had, in the preceding reign, been reduced to a state of vassallage to the English crown; but the Welsh continued to be troublesome neighbours. Ever ready to take advantage of any disturbance that broke out in England, they never failed, on such occasions, to renew their predatory inroads on the frontiers; and in the late civil wars, Llewellyn, the reigning prince, had constantly aided the English

malecontents. Edward offered him peace on condition that he should make satisfaction for all the damages done to the borders of England during the wars; but Llewellyn refused to accede to this proposal. In the

A. D. 1277. beginning of the spring, Edward

having assembled a numerous army, put himself at its head, and by cutting a wide road through a vast forest, opened himself a passage into the centre of Wales. Llewellyn being unable to withstand this formidable invasion, retired to the mountains of Snowden, the usual refuge of the Welsh when driven to the last extremity. The English fleet, in the mean while, reduced the Isle of Anglesey; and the Welsh prince being pressed on every side, was obliged to sue for peace, which he obtained on the hard condition of paying fifty thousand pounds for the expences of the war, besides the annual sum of a thousand marks for the Isle of Anglesey, and several other articles of inferior importance. But Edward having sufficiently humbled his enemy, generously remitted the pecuniary conditions, and liberated the hostages which Llewellyn had delivered. He not only restored to that prince his intended consort, the daughter of the late earl of Leicester, who had been cap-

tured by the English, but did him the honour to be present at his nuptials; and in order to attach the Welsh princes to the interests of England, he created David, the brother of Llewellyn, earl of Denbigh, and gave him in marriage a rich English heiress, the daughter of the earl of Derby.

The Welsh war being ended, Edward was again left at leisure to attend to internal regulations. Among the various abuses that prevailed in the kingdom, the adulteration of the coin excited a general complaint. On its being discovered that the Jews were the chief authors of this evil, he caused all those that were in England to be seized in one day. After a strict examination, two hundred and eighty being convicted of clipping and coining, or circulating counterfeit money, received sentence of death, and were executed at London, besides great numbers in other parts of the kingdom.*

An affair of a different nature, but of great public importance, next attracted the attention of the king and the parliament. In those dark ages, when ignorance and vice kept an equal pace, those who were possessed of affluence, and apprehensive of approaching

dissolution, after a life of licentiousness, generally sought to bribe the justice of heaven by liberal donations to churches and monasteries. This custom had become so prevalent, as to excite a general complaint among relatives, who were thus deprived of their inheritance; and it was represented that all the lands in the kingdom would, in process of time, be in the hands of the clergy, if people were suffered thus to alienate their estates to the church, in the vain expectation of purchasing the salvation of their souls. The king laid the matter before the parliament,

A. D. 1279.

and to remedy so growing an abuse the famous mortmain act was passed, prohibiting all such bequests, without the express consent of the sovereign.

But in attempting another regulation, Edward fell into an error which he soon found it necessary to rectify. During the troubles of the late reigns, many persons had gotten possession of estates to which they had no legal right. This was a fertile source of litigation, and the crown itself suffered by these disorders. Writs of inquiry were issued, and all persons possessing contested estates were obliged to shew in what manner they had been acquired. Some regulation of this kind was just and necessary; but the king

pushed the matter so far as to convert it into a means of oppression. During the lapse of two centuries, a great part of which period had been filled with scenes of confusion, productive of various revolutions in families, great numbers of the nobles had lost their original records. The king, taking advantage of this circumstance, issued a proclamation, enjoining all those who held lands of the crown to lay their titles before the judges; and many who could not produce them, were obliged to pay large sums of money in order to preserve their estates. But the firmness of the earl of Warwick put a stop to these proceedings. That nobleman being summoned before the judges of the crown, was required to shew the original title by which he held his estates, when drawing an old rusty sword, he made this resolute answer: "My ancestors, coming in with William the Bastard, won these lands by the sword; and by the sword I will defend them against any that will take them away; for that king did not conquer for himself alone, neither did my ancestors assist him for that end."* This decisive reply convinced the king of the danger of persisting in measures

* Tindal's Notes on Rapin, vol. 1. p. 360.

which tended to excite a revolt of the barons, and to involve him in the same troubles that John and Henry III. had experienced. He therefore made a prudent use of the hint, and by revoking his proclamation, regained the affections of the nobility.

Edward was now about to be employed in an affair highly beneficial to his kingdom. His generosity and politeness to the Welsh princes Llewellyn and David might have prevented the renewal of hostilities, unless it be supposed that Edward in conferring these favours, had only intended to conceal his future designs on their country. The Welsh always bore the English yoke with impatience, and if the grievances related by certain historians be considered as resting on substantial evidence, it must be supposed that Edward had formed the design of driving them to revolt.* It also appears that a prediction of Merlin, their famous prophet, had no inconsiderable share in prompting them, once more, to try the fortune of arms. The Welsh imagined from this prediction that Llewellyn was destined to sway the sceptre of Brutus, whom their fabulous legends represented as the first king over the whole island of Albion;

* Vide Tyrrel, vol. 4. p. 36, &c. Powel's Hist. Wales, p. 339, &c.

and this fancy had taken such fast hold of their minds, that both the prince and the people flattered themselves with its speedy accomplishment. Llewellyn having transmitted to Edward a statement of his real or pretended grievances, and obtaining no redress, instantly flew to arms, ravaged the English borders, and defeated their troops in different rencounters.

On receiving intelligence of this revolt, Edward summoned his barons, and sending for a great number of foreign troops from Guienne and Gascony, collected a numerous army.* On his approach, Llewellyn again retired to the inaccessible mountains of Snowden, a position which might have been maintained without danger. The king of England perceiving the impossibility of attacking the Welsh prince, resolved to blockade his army by securing all the avenues that led into those mountainous regions. Here Llewellyn might, without any risk to himself, have wearied out his besiegers, had not a trifling victory gained by one of his detachments over a small body of English, who had come over from Anglesey, induced him to leave his impregnable

post. This inconsiderable advantage was, by the credulity of the prince and his people, interpreted as the beginning of the fulfilment of Merlin's prophecy. Flattered with this delusive expectation, Llewellyn descended into the plain without considering the inferiority of his forces both in numbers and discipline. The Welsh and the English, for the last time, drew up against each other in hostile array. Llewellyn soon discovered the error into which he had been led by his credulity. He fought with a courage inspired by desperation, and was killed on Dec. 11th, A. D. 1283. the field of battle, after seeing his army entirely routed. His head, crowned with ivy, was, by Edward's command, exposed on the walls of the Tower of London. David, the brother of Llewellyn, soon after fell into the hands of the English. The unfortunate prince begged for mercy ; but as he was the last of the family of the sovereigns of Wales, the inexorable Edward resolved that the conquest of that country should be secured by his death. He caused him to be condemned and executed as a traitor. His head was placed on the walls of the Tower near that of the prince, his brother ; and his four quarters were sent to be exposed, in a similar manner, at Winchester, Bristol, Northampton,

and York. Thus did Edward endeavour, by terror, to prevent any future revolts against his authority.* Wales was annexed to England: foreign conquests might add lustre to a reign; but this was conducive to the felicity of the kingdom. Thus the Welsh, those interesting remains of the ancient Britons, finally lost their national independence, after having preserved it in that narrow corner of the island more than eight centuries. Without any foreign alliance, and destitute of all succours, they had, during this long period, stood their ground against the Saxon and Norman kings of England, most of whom had attempted to subdue them with forces greatly superior. They had often been compelled to pay tribute to the English monarchs; but they had always remained a distinct nation, governed by peculiar laws. The loss of these privileges were amply repaid by those which they acquired. From a state of barbarian freedom, they emerged to a state of more civilized liberty. They became one and the same nation with the conquerors; and have, ever since, enjoyed all the privileges of that excellent constitution, which, after the revolution of a few ages, was so

* Rapin l. p. 360.

judiciously completed as to produce the largest portion of political felicity that any people has ever enjoyed.*

The kingdom being now in a state of peace and security, Edward committed the regency to the earl of Pembroke, and embarked for France, where he spent a considerable time in soliciting, from Philip the Fair, the restitution of the provinces which Philip Augustus had wrested from the crown of England. But in this affair he was unsuccessful. After passing three years on the continent, during which period nothing of importance was transacted, Edward returned to England, and immediately set about reforming several abuses which had been introduced in his absence, especially in the administration of justice. On making a strict inquiry, it was found that many of the judges, and other magistrates, had suffered themselves to be corrupted by bribes. Of this number was

* In achieving and securing the conquest of Wales, Edward has, by some historians, been charged with great inhumanity. He is said to have ordered a general massacre of the bards, whose poetical effusions inflamed the Welsh with a love of independence. The story has been generally received; but it is questioned by the most judicious historians. Rapin is silent on the subject; and a modern writer says that it rests wholly on the authority of Wynne, who lived centuries after the event, Jones's *Hist. Brecknock*, vol. 1. chap. 8. This author says that, after the lapse of so many ages, the Welsh still retain an habitual aversion to the English. *Hist. Brecknock* 1. chap. 10. This can only be understood of the vulgar.

the chief justiciary, who was banished the realm, and his estates were confiscated. The other delinquents were punished by heavy fines, which brought large sums of money into the treasury, while equity was established in the courts of judicature.

The next important regulation was the banishment of the Jews. These people appear to have been first introduced into England by William the Conqueror. They enjoyed various and important privileges, especially that of being proprietors of land; and they had not only a high priest of their religion, but judges of their own nation to hear and determine their differences.* By traffic, usury, mortgages, &c. they had acquired great wealth both in money and land. But, at the same time, they were subject to exorbitant and frequent exactions. The taxes, imposed on them, constituted a distinct and considerable branch of the royal revenue, under the name of the Exchequer of the Jews. The king, who was their only protector, seems to have been the absolute lord of their estates and effects; and he fleeced them as they fleeced his subjects.† Without mentioning a number of other instances, especially in

* Rapin I. p. 364.

† Tindal's notes on Rapin I. p. 347.

the reigns of Richard I. John, and Henry III. Aaron, a Jew of York, had, in the year 1250, paid to the last mentioned monarch, at different times, sums to the amount of thirty thousand marks of silver, besides two hundred marks of gold to the queen.* And in the short space of little more than seven years from A. D. 1265, the fiftieth of Henry III. to the spring of 1273, the second of Edward I. the crown had received from the Jews more than four hundred and twenty thousand pounds, a very large sum in that age, and equal, in weight, to one million two hundred and sixty thousand pounds in modern money.† In short, it appears, that the wealth of the Jews was a fund, on which the crown made large demands on every emergency. An insatiable thirst of gain caused them to submit to these extortions; and, indeed, in these ages of bigotry and ignorance, there was scarcely any christian country in which they were more equitably treated. The English had long desired their expulsion; but they had always diverted the blow by presents to the king and his ministers. Although the accusation of crucifying christian children can only be regarded as

* M. Paris, p. 785.

† Vide Coke's Instit. 2.

a calumny invented by their enemies; yet they were undoubtedly guilty of other crimes, such as usury, clipping, and adulterating the coin, and various practices which merited the public animadversion. The king being unable any longer to protect them without giving great offence to the nation, the parliament resolved on their expulsion.

A. D. 1290.

They were permitted to carry away their moveable effects, but their houses and lands were confiscated.

About this period Edward I. began to be engaged in the grand affair of his reign. Alexander III. king of Scotland, dying in 1285, without issue, the succession to his crown devolved on his granddaughter Margaret, princess of Norway.* Ever since the death of that monarch Edward had meditated the design of uniting, in his own family, the crowns of England and Scotland; and, in that view, had negotiated with the Scottish barons a treaty of marriage between his son and the heiress of their kingdom. A measure so beneficial, both to the Scotch and the English, met with universal approbation. But the plans of human prudence and policy

* Alexander had three children, David, Alexander, and Margaret, queen of Norway, but they were all dead.

are all uncertain. The happy period marked in the book of divine providence for uniting the two nations which divided Great Britain, was yet at a distance; and the moment which seemed to promise a perpetual calm, was soon followed by tremendous storms. All hopes of an union suddenly and unexpectedly vanished. While the English monarch was employed in regulating the administration of Scotland in the name of Young Edward and Margaret, that princess died in the island of Orkney, to which she had been driven by stress of weather in her passage from Norway. As soon as the news of her death reached Scotland, it excited extraordinary commotions. A number of competitors for the crown divided the kingdom into different factions; and the nobles, regardless of the right of the claimants, or the good of their country, espoused one party or another according as they were impelled by private interest or family connexions.

Among the pretenders to the crown of Scotland, John Baliol and Robert Bruce divided almost all the suffrages in the kingdom. Both of them were descendants of David, earl of Huntingdon, third son of David I. king of Scotland. Bruce was the son of Isabella, earl David's second daughter;

and Baliol the grandson of Margaret the eldest daughter.* Bruce was therefore the nearest in blood to Earl David; but Baliol being descended from the elder branch, his right, according to the laws of succession, at present established, would be deemed preferable. Each of the rivals, however, was supported by a powerful faction, and ready to decide their pretensions by arms. But in order to avoid the miseries of a civil war, the king of England was chosen umpire; and both parties agreed to submit to his decision. At this period historians begin to discuss the famous controversy concerning the independence of Scotland, a question banefully interesting to the two nations in that age, but now only a subject of antiquarian curiosity.

From the earliest ages, to which the feudal system can be traced, the Scottish kings had done homage to the crown of England for possessions which they held in the northern parts of that kingdom. According to the feudal ideas, the homage which they performed on this account was not derogatory to the regal dignity, as the kings of England themselves had always done homage to the

* Rapin, 1. p. 366. Robertson's Hist. Scotland, 1. p. 11 and 12.

sovereigns of France for Normandy, Anjou, Guienne, and all the other provinces, which they held within the precincts of that realm. The principal dispute, therefore, between the Scotch and English historians, is whether the homages performed by the kings of Scotland to the kings of England were for the provinces which they acknowledged themselves to hold of the crown of England, or for the whole of their dominions. National vanity has cherished national prejudice through a long succession of ages; and historians, in discussing the question, have perplexed it with difficulties which have rendered its solution almost impossible.* It is certain, however, that an unexpected event brought the Scottish crown into a state of dependence on England. William, surnamed the Lion, king of Scotland, being made prisoner by the English troops, Henry II. among other hard conditions as the price of his liberty, extorted from him an acknowledgement of complete vassalage, and compelled him to do homage for his whole kingdom. But Richard I. on receiving a valuable consideration in money, renounced his claim to the paramount sove-

* Dr. Robertson seems to make it appear that the Scottish historians have the strongest evidence, as well as the greatest probability on their side. *Hist. Scot.* l. p. 10 and 11.

reignty of Scotland; and, by an authentic charter, discharged the Scottish monarch and his successors from the homage imposed by Henry.*

From this statement it appears that the kingdom of Scotland was entirely independent when Baliol and Bruce disputed the succession to its crown. But Edward was artful and enterprising, and commanding a powerful and martial people, resolved to turn to his advantage the divisions which prevailed in the country, and the interested ambition of the competitors. Pretending to examine the claims with due care and solemnity, he summoned the Scottish barons to Norham, where he opened the business by declaring that as sovereign lord of Scotland, he was come to do justice with strict impartiality. As the first step towards settling the succession, he required of the Scots a positive recognition of his paramount dominion. Twelve claimants appeared, and all of them acknowledged the sovereignty of Edward. The nobles, being some of them gained, and others intimidated, made no opposition; and their silence was interpreted into a formal assent. This step led to another of still

* See reigns of Henry II. and Richard I. .

greater importance. As it would have been in vain to pronounce a sentence without having power to carry it into execution, Edward demanded possession of the kingdom, that he might be able to deliver it to the claimant whose right should be found preferable. Such was the impatient ambition of the candidates, and such the pusillanimity of the nobles, that they assented to this demand: the earl of Angus was the only one that hesitated to deliver up to the king of England the castles of which he had the custody.

The business having proceeded thus far, and about a hundred commissioners being chosen by the king and the candidates, in order to
A. D. 1291. examine the question, the 3d day of

August was appointed for the decision. But the commissioners representing to the king that the Scots were so divided in opinion concerning their own laws, as to render it extremely difficult to settle so disputable a point, requested a longer time for deliberation, and the meeting was postponed to the 14th of October. On that day the commissioners assembled in the presence of the king: the two principal candidates, Baliol and Bruce, preferred their claims, and after a number of arguments and replies the session was adjourned; and the sixth of November was

appointed for pronouncing the sentence. On that day Edward solemnly declared that the pretensions of Bruce were ill founded. But as the exclusion of Bruce did not necessarily imply the admission of Baliol, Edward ordered the commissioners to examine the pretensions of the other candidates. The last meeting being held on the 17th November, and the claims of the other competitors being rejected, Edward adjudged the kingdom of Scotland to John Baliol, who agreed to hold it in vassalage to the crown of England.*

Thus was decided this singular process, which eventually gave rise to a war between England and Scotland, which lasted with little intermission upwards of seventy years, and drenched both kingdoms with blood. Dr. Robertson insinuates that Edward gave judgment in favour of Baliol, because he found him the least formidable of the claimants, and the most obsequious to his will.† But the candid inquirer will perceive that whatever might be the secret views of the English monarch, he examined the case with great deliberation and apparent impartiality,

* Rapin, l. p. 367 to 372. Robertson's Hist. Scot. l. p. 12 and 13

† Hist. Scotland, l. p. 13.

and decided the question according to the laws of succession established among the most enlightened nations. Some historians would insinuate that Edward had no other intention than to set up Baliol as a pageant of state, until he should see a fit opportunity of seizing the kingdom. But the actions of princes, rather than their motives, are the proper subjects for history: the former are public: the latter are in general carefully concealed, and their pretended developement by historical writers can amount to no more than conjecture. The subsequent conduct of Edward gives an air of probability to the supposition that his design was to provoke the Scots to hostility, in order to have a specious pretext for reducing them under his immediate dominion. He soon began to make them feel the weight of his power, even in the most trivial matters. Baliol was scarcely put in possession of his kingdom, before he was summoned to appear before Edward, his sovereign lord, to answer the complaints of a merchant of Gascony. This person

March 8th,
A. D. 1293. had presented a petition, setting forth that Alexander III. the late Scottish monarch, stood indebted to him in the sum of £2197. 8s. and that all his applications for payment to the new king having proved

ineffectual, he therefore applied for justice to Edward, as paramount sovereign of Scotland.* Edward readily embraced this occasion of exercising his newly-acquired rights; and other pretexts, equally favourable, were successively furnished by the complaints of different persons, both English and Scotch. Among these were the earl of Fife, who had been imprisoned by the parliament of Scotland; a lady of the Isle of Man, whose real or pretended claims to that island had been rejected by Baliol; the abbot of the monastery of Reading in England, who was engaged in a litigation with the bishop of St. Andrews; and the bishop of Durham, who complained that the new king of Scotland had refused him justice in an affair relating to his diocese. Historians amuse their readers with florid declamations against the ambition of kings; but a candid examination of facts will shew that a great part of the political evil, seen in the world, arises from the jarring interests and restless dispositions of subjects.

The fierce and turbulent barons of Scotland, who had so lately been independent, bore, with impatience, a yoke to which they were not accustomed. Even the passive

* Rymer's Fœd. Tom. 2. p. 605.

spirit of Baliol began to revolt. Having been summoned six different times to appear before Edward, he plainly perceived himself to be his slave rather than his vassal, and began to meditate the restoration of the Scottish crown to its former independence.* In the mean while, a dispute, which arose between England and France, appeared favourable to his design. Some Norman vessels having been seized by the English, Philip IV. demanded satisfaction, which Edward refusing, was summoned before the court of peers to answer the charge of treason against the king of France, his paramount sovereign. The king of England not appearing, was declared guilty: Guienne was confiscated; and Philip immediately seized on that duchy. Edward at first endeavoured to recover it by negociation; but this proving ineffectual, he began to prepare for war. The kings of France and Scotland, in the mean while, formed an alliance, which was no sooner concluded, than Baliol considered it as time to enter on action. He had long been held in suspense on account of his oath to the king of England; but in order to remove this scruple, Philip procured him the

* Rapin l. p. 374.

papal dispensation. Edward being informed of these measures, resolved to direct his whole force against Scotland, as Baliol's revolt afforded him a plausible pretence to seize on that kingdom, which was of far greater importance than the duchy of Guienne. Instead, therefore, of embarking for France, as he had intended, he marched directly for Scotland. In his way he was met

March 1st,
A. D. 1295.

by a messenger from Baliol with a letter, in which, after enumerating his causes of complaint, he concluded by renouncing his fealty and homage as a vassal.

As the king of England intended to begin his operations by the siege of Berwick, he had prepared a fleet for the naval blockade of the town. At the first his arms were unsuccessful. The Scots having surprised his fleet, burned and sunk eighteen ships; and about the same time, a detachment from their army cut in pieces a body of above a thousand English troops. The politic Edward made use of the divisions of the Scots in order to facilitate the conquest of their country. It has already been observed that two great factions, one for Bruce, the other for Baliol, divided all the interest and influence of the kingdom. Edward offered the crown of Scotland to Bruce, provided that he would

declare against Baliol. Robert gladly acceded to the proposal, and strengthened the party of Edward with a great number of his adherents.

After taking these preliminary measures, the English monarch commenced the siege of Berwick, which, being regarded as the key of Scotland, was strongly fortified, and provided with a numerous garrison. Edward finding his troops repulsed in every assault, resolved, at last, to try the effect of stratagem. He suddenly raised the siege, and, at the same time, by means of some soldiers, who, pretending to desert, entered the town, he caused a report to be spread that the approach of the king of Scotland had compelled him to retire. This rumour being followed by the false intelligence that Baliol was within a league of the place, the garrison and the inhabitants sallied out in crowds to meet him, supposing that Edward was already at a considerable distance. But they soon discovered their fatal mistake. This disorderly multitude falling into an ambuscade began to retreat with precipitation, and were so closely pursued that the English entered with them into the town, and made a dreadful slaughter. Rapin estimates the number of Scots that were slain

March 30th,
A. D. 1296.

at above seven thousand. Another historian of credit says, that sixty thousand persons perished on this occasion; but this must be considered as an exaggerated statement.

The king of England, having thus made himself master of Berwick, marched to Dunbar, and was scarcely arrived before the walls of that place, when he received intelligence of Baliol's approach with a numerous army. Both the kings were eager to bring the affair to a speedy decision; and an obstinate and sanguinary battle was fought, in which the Scots, after bravely disputing the victory, were, at length, totally routed with the loss of twenty thousand men, a number which constituted a very considerable part of their army. After this signal success, Edward entered Dunbar without meeting with any resistance. From thence he marched to Roxborough, of which he obtained possession with equal facility. Edinburgh and its castle surrendered after a siege of eight days. Sterling, Perth, and all the most considerable towns in the kingdom, successively opened their gates to the conqueror. Before the end of the campaign, Edward was so completely master of Scotland, that the king and his subjects were obliged to submit to

his mercy, and resign the kingdom to his disposal.*

In order to confirm this important acquisition, Edward summoned the states of Scotland to assemble at Berwick, where all the nobility and officers of the kingdom swore fealty to him, and delivered up the castles and fortified places which they had in possession. Among all the Scottish nobles, William Douglas alone refused the oath, and was sent as a prisoner to England, where he spent the remainder of his days in confinement rather than acknowledge Edward for his sovereign. Baliol was sent to the Tower of London, but was removed from thence to Oxford. The other Scottish lords, whom Edward thought it necessary to secure, were committed to different prisons in England, and some were permitted to reside at liberty to the south of the Trent, under the penalty of death if they passed that river.

The conduct of Edward, how severely soever it may be censured by some historians, exhibits the beneficial views of his policy. Had it been his sole object to be crowned king of Scotland, nothing, at this juncture, could have given him the least opposition.

* Rymer's Fœd. 2. p. 718.

But it was not his intention that the two kingdoms should ever be again divided. His design was to annex Scotland to England as he had already annexed Wales, and to unite, in one kingdom, the whole island of Great Britain. Had the Scots freely acquiesced in this salutary plan, the oceans of blood, which afterwards drenched the land, would have been spared, and a deluge of calamities been averted from the inhabitants of this island.

The design of Edward to unite the two kingdoms, evidently appears from his removing the crown and sceptre of Scotland, with the rest of the regalia, to London. And as it was necessary at the same time to eradicate, as much as possible, from the minds of the Scots, the remembrance of their ancient independence and national distinction, he caused the famous fatidical stone, on which the inauguration of their kings was performed, to be carried away from Scone. This shapeless stone, which is now to be seen in Westminster Abbey, was, by a fabulous legend, asserted to be the same that served the patriarch Jacob for a pillow.* To this extraor-

* Geac. ch.

dinary monument the credulity of the Scots had attached the fate of their monarchy, of which they considered it as the palladium; and some superstitious or artful politician had excited or cherished the opinion, by engraving on it the following distich, which the people regarded as an oracle.

"Ni fallat fatum, Scoti quocunque locatum

"Invenient lapidem, regnare teneant ibidem."

"Or fates deceived and heaven decrees in vain,

"Or where they find this stone the Scots shall reign."

Edward knowing the nature of current ideas and the power of public opinion, however extravagantly founded, removed this fancied palladium to Westminster, in order to impress, on the minds of the Scots, a belief that the fatal period of their monarchy was arrived. He also seized the public archives and ransacked the churches and monasteries for historical monuments, some of which were carried into England and others were destroyed.† After thus endeavouring to obliterate every memorial of Scottish independence, Edward took care to secure his con-

* Buchan, lib. 6. Tind. notes on Rapin, 1. p. 375. The classical reader will here be put in mind of the famous palladium of Troy.

† Dr. Robertson's Hist. Scotland, vol. 1. p. 5. This story, although related by most historians, is not credited by Tyrrel, who ascribes its invention to Hector Boethius, p. 97.

quest by placing English garrisons and governors in the fortified places; and leaving the chief command to John Warren, earl of Surrey and Sussex, he returned in triumph to England.

The war with Scotland being thus brought to a conclusion, Edward resolved to carry his arms into France, as his negotiations for the recovery of Guienne had proved ineffectual. But as he had to deal with a potent adversary, it was needful to have a more numerous army than he could levy in England. On this consideration he judged it expedient to form continental alliances, in order to counterbalance the disparity of force between England and France. The earl of Flanders, who had long been at variance with Philip the Fair, readily entered into an alliance with Edward. The emperor Adolphus of Nassau, the duke of Austria, the archbishop of Cologne, and several other princes of Germany, with the duke of Brabant, and the earls of Juliers, Holland, and Luxembourg, entered into the league: all agreed to bring forward their forces, and the king of England engaged to supply them with sums of money.*

* Vide Rymer's Fœd. Tom. 2.

In his preparations for this expedition, Edward experienced considerable difficulties. Having obtained from the parliament an aid of the eighth penny from the cities and towns, and a twelfth from the rest of the laity, the clergy refused their contributions, pretending an exemption from giving aids to the king, by virtue of a bull from Pope Benedict VIII. In vain did Edward represent that as they possessed fees in the kingdom, and enjoyed the protection of the laws like the rest of the subjects, it was reasonable that they should contribute to the public expences. These remonstrances being found ineffectual, he proceeded to more violent measures: he commanded their lay-fees to be seized, and the whole body to be thrown out of the protection of the laws. The clergy being sensible that Edward was not one of those princes who were to be intimidated by censures and anathemas, were glad to submit and compound with him by granting him the fifth part of their effects.

The levying of men was also attended with some embarrassment. Edward had planned a powerful diversion in Guienne, while he himself should press the enemy on the side of Flanders. Having assembled the barons, in order to determine, with pre-

cision, the number of men that each could furnish, every one desired to be excused from serving in Guienne, where the king was not to command in person. Edward, not satisfied with their excuses, told the nobles that he should give their estates to others that would be more obedient. This menace greatly incensed the barons. Hugh Bigod, earl of Norfolk, and marshal of England, whose office was to lead the vanguard of the army, told the king that he would serve where he commanded in person, but not in any other place. Edward being highly exasperated, swore that he would make him go to Guienne, to which the earl answered that he should not. The imperious monarch, boiling with rage, swore by the eternal God that he should either march or be hanged: "By the eternal God," replied the earl, "I will neither march nor be hanged," and instantly withdrew from court.*

This determined behaviour of the barons, with the remembrance of what had happened in the two foregoing reigns, convinced the haughty Edward of the danger of endeavouring to carry too far his authority. Although

* Rapin, vol. I. p. 378. This instance is here related to shew the haughty spirit of the feudal system.

his imperious disposition inclined him to revenge the insults which he had received, his prudence overcame his pride, and rendered him careful to avoid a contest with the nobility of his kingdom. He was also impatient to embark for Flanders, where the circumstances of the earl, his ally, demanded his assistance. Before his departure, he received from the bishops, the barons, and the commons, a remonstrance, exhibiting a long list of grievances, and complaining of several violations of the great charter. This proceeding made him still more sensible of the danger of provoking a nation which seemed so ripe for commotion. He returned a gracious answer to the remonstrance, and promised to redress all grievances after his return.

In the mean while, Philip the Fair was preparing to repel the attack with which he was threatened. He formed an alliance with the kings of Castile and Arragon, and his consort Joan, queen of Navarre, brought her forces to his assistance. He bribed or intimidated the confederate princes from coming forward with their troops; and having thus arranged his measures, he entered Flanders with an army of sixty thousand men, and commenced the siege of Lisle. The earl of Flanders being unable to resist this formid-

able invasion, anxiously waited the arrival of the English.

At length Edward arrived at Sluys
August 27,
A. D. 1297. with an army of about fifty-one thousand men, a force very inadequate to his vast projects; but he relied on a powerful assistance from his allies. In this expectation he was egregiously deceived. The confederacy which he had formed at so great an expence, was dissolved without entering on action. The earl of Flanders was the only ally that adhered to his engagements; but the number of troops that he was able to bring into the field was far less than he had promised and Edward had expected. The Flemings were divided into two factions, one for the earl, the other for the king of France: some approved of the war, while others represented it as ruinous to their country.

When the king of England came to Bruges, he found the whole city in confusion through the animosity of the two opposite factions. It was not without great difficulty that he appeased these commotions, by granting the citizens considerable privileges in regard to their commerce with England. On proceeding to Ghent he witnessed the same disorderly scenes. That city had always been distinguished by the turbulent spirit of its inhabitants; and the rebellious faction had

now acquired a dangerous ascendancy. While Edward was thus embarrassed by the contentions of the Flemings, Philip, after a siege of three months, made himself master of Lisle. He then reduced Douay, Courtray, and some other places, and advanced to Bruges, which surrendered without resistance. The king of England seeing all his plans disconcerted by the divisions of the Flemings and the defection of his other allies, who deserted his interests, after taking his money, was glad to procure a short truce, which was afterwards prolonged for two years. Before he left Ghent he was in great danger of losing his life in a furious sedition of the people, who intended to massacre all the English. This circumstance giving him reason to dread further insults, he hastened his return to his own dominions, where his presence was rendered necessary by new commotions in Scotland.

While Edward was occupied in Flanders, a considerable number of Scots took the opportunity to revolt, under the conduct of the celebrated William Wallace; a private gentleman, who could not boast of either an illustrious birth or an affluent fortune. But although destitute of these advantages, he possessed an athletic strength and daring courage—qualities which, in that

age, were held in high estimation ; and his disinterested patriotism has procured him an honourable distinction in history. While the nobles, divided by factions or adhering to the conqueror, were pursuing their private interests, Wallace resolved to restore the independence of his country, and assembled a body of troops for that purpose. Although the number of his forces at first was only small, his progress was rapid ; and his success was equal to the boldness of the enterprise. His army was daily augmented : the Scots having now found a leader, flocked in crowds to his standard. He attacked the English garrisons which had been weakened by the expedition to Flanders ; and by his severity to those who fell into his hands, he so intimidated others that scarcely any place held out to extremity. In a very short time he recovered all the towns from the English, with the single exception of Berwick.* Having at length gained an important victory near Sterling, he became master of Berwick ; and the reduction of that place completed the expulsion of the English from Scotland. In consequence of this success, Wallace was appointed regent of the kingdom.

* Rapin I. p. 380.

Edward was no sooner arrived in England than he resolved to punish the revolt of the Scots ; but before he undertook the expedition, it was necessary to prevent them from receiving assistance from France. He was therefore desirous of concluding a peace with Philip ; and both princes regarding the Pope as their common father, referred their dispute to his arbitration. Being now in the way of reconciliation with the French monarch, he endeavoured to gain the affections of his own subjects. For this purpose he called a parliament, and without any solicitation confirmed the great charter, a measure of which the good effects were very perceptible.

Having nothing now to fear from foreign hostility or domestic disturbance, Edward put himself at the head of a numerous army, and advancing into Scotland, met with the enemy near Falkirk. The two armies were not long without coming to action. On mounting his horse for the attack, the king met with an accident which, had he possessed less fortitude, might have turned against him the fate of the day. While putting his foot in the stirrup, the horse taking fright, threw him, and with a kick broke two of his ribs. This hurt, however, did not prevent him from being in the battle, where he commanded

with as much presence of mind as if he had felt no pain. The conflict was extremely obstinate and bloody, and its issue proved fatal to the Scots, whose loss is, by some writers, stated at sixty thousand men, while others reduce it to ten thousand. Such are the contradictory accounts of historians; but both these estimates must be erroneous, and, perhaps, almost equally wide of the truth. Wallace, with the feeble remains of his army, retired into the interior part of the country, amongst mountains and morasses, which secured him from the pursuit of his enemies, while Edward, improving his victory, recovered all the fortified towns as rapidly as he had lost them, but was prevented from advancing further from the desolated state of the country, and the want of provisions for his army. For these reasons, as soon as he had taken the necessary measures for the preservation of his conquests, he returned to England, and passed part of the winter at Cottingham, near Beverley.*

Wallace, in the mean while, was not in a condition to take advantage of Edward's absence. He had not only lost his army, but

* Wals. p. 76. Cottingham is a large and elegant village at nearly an equal distance from Beverley and Hull.

was an object of jealousy to the Scotch nobles, who began to suspect that he aspired to the crown. This, indeed, had been one of the principal causes of his defeat. Nobility of birth was the idol of the feudal system ; and the barons of Scotland chose rather to be subject to a foreign prince than to own obedience to a person of mean extraction. Wallace being sensible that this jealousy was extremely prejudicial to the interests of his country, resigned the regency, and those who retained the love of independence chose Comyn, a nobleman of high rank, for the exercise of that office. But this distinction was now of little importance. The authority of the new regent extended over only an inconsiderable part of the kingdom ; and his military force consisted only of a few troops that had escaped from the defeat at Falkirk.

The truce between England and France being ready to expire, the Pope sent his arbitration, the substance of which was that Edward should again be put in possession of Guienne, and that, as his consort Eleanor was dead, he should marry Margaret, the sister of Philip. And, in order more firmly to cement the union between the two kings, his Holiness also proposed that Isabella,

the daughter of Philip, should be given in marriage to young Edward, son of the king of England. This arbitration may be placed among the numerous instances of the shortsightedness of human policy. The good pontiff undoubtedly regarded the marriage of young Edward with Isabella, as the bond of a durable peace between France and England; but without mentioning the calamities which the conduct of that princess brought on her unfortunate consort, this union, by giving to her son Edward III. a strong claim to the French crown, was the source of the most destructive wars that ever took place between the two kingdoms. Both the kings, however, were perfectly satisfied with the award of Rome. In the existing circumstances of the moment, it seemed to promise the happiest effects; and papal infallibility itself could not foresee its remote consequences.

As it required some time to settle all the particulars in which the interests of Edward and Philip were concerned, the truce was prolonged till the treaty of peace could be finally concluded. The king of France also procured a truce of seven months for the insurgents of Scotland. But the regent assembling the Scottish lords, represented to them that this suspension of hostilities af-

forded to Edward an opportunity of securing his conquest, and that this was therefore the time to make a grand effort for recovering their independence. The barons, ever restless and turbulent, unanimously resolved to take arms, and soon brought the people to the same determination. The spirit of revolt was so general, and the insurrection so well organized, that all Scotland arose as one man. The inhabitants of the towns, and those of the country, taking arms in one day, the English garrisons were attacked, all at the same moment, with such fury, that any effectual resistance was impossible; and they were glad to save their lives by desiring permission to evacuate the kingdom.

These events excited the surprise and indignation of the king of England, who had twice conquered Scotland without being able to retain any part of his conquest. Having assembled a most formidable army, he entered, for the third time, that unfortunate country. The ill-armed and undisciplined militia of Scotland being no match for the warlike troops of Edward, would have retired at his approach; but he advanced upon them so rapidly that he forced them to risk an engagement, in which they were entirely routed, and, in all probability, their whole army

would have been annihilated, had not its shattered remains retreated into the morasses, which were known only to the natives; and into which the English durst not continue the pursuit.

The Scots being convinced, by reiterated experience, that resistance by arms was impossible, had recourse to the protection of the Pope, who was then revered as the common father, and often appealed to as the common judge of all christian princes and nations. His Holiness, in consequence of this application, claimed Scotland as the patrimony of St. Peter, declaring it to be well known, to all the world, that it had always belonged to the see of Rome, although this was the first time that any thing of the kind had ever been mentioned. He, therefore, ordered Edward to desist from his proceedings against the Scots, and to send his ambassadors to Rome, in order to settle the affair.

Edward was highly incensed at the impudent pretensions of the Pope. But notwithstanding his determination to reduce the Scots under his dominion, he durst not refuse the pressing solicitations of the king of France, whose powerful mediation procured them a truce. In the beginning of the year

1301.

Edward called a parliament at Lincoln, to consult on the pretensions of the Pope to the sovereignty of Scotland, and on the answer to be returned to his Holiness. The parliament being no less exasperated than the king, it was unanimously resolved that a letter, signed by all the barons of the realm, should be sent to the Pope. In this letter they plainly told his Holiness that his assertions were groundless, and that it was publicly known that Scotland, as to temporals, had never belonged to the see of Rome.* This letter, from the parliament, was soon after followed by one from the king, accompanied by a memorial, asserting the ancient sovereignty of the English crown over Scotland. Supposititious treaties; the partial evidence of doubtful chronicles; and the fabulous tales of British history were all brought forward by Edward in support of his title, which he pretended to derive from Brutus I. fictitious king of Albion, tracing it through the reigns of all the ideal monarchs mentioned by Geoffery of Monmouth. But his letter was couched in terms expressive of the highest respect for the successor of St. Peter; and the dispute, which

* Rymer's Fœd. tom. 2. p. 874, &c.

this subject occasioned between the king and the Pope, produced no important effects.

A. D. 1301. The truce, which Philip the Fair had procured for Scotland, being about to expire, Segrave, governor of Berwick, had orders from Edward to prepare for the renewal of the war. That general, not imagining the Scots to be able to make any resistance, divided his army into three bodies, in order more effectually to ravage and devastate the country. But this measure proved fatal to his expedition. The Scots attacked

Feb. 24th.
A. D. 1302. and defeated his three divisions in one day, and the English general, being obliged to retreat, another truce, which like the former, was owing to the mediation of Philip, put a temporary stop to hostilities.

May 20th.
A. D. 1303. After several years of negociation peace was at length concluded between England and France, on the terms of the papal arbitration; and Edward was again put in possession of Guienne, on condition of doing homage, as formerly, to the French monarchs. But the allies of the two kings not being included in the treaty, the earl of Flanders was left to the mercy of Philip, and the Scots were abandoned to the fury of

Edward.* This, as an eminent historian observes, is an instance, among many others, of the facility with which powerful princes often sacrifice the interests of their weaker allies.

A. D. 1303. Edward having nothing now to fear from France, undertook his fourth expedition into Scotland, with an army so numerous as to render resistance impossible, and penetrating to the extremities of the island, ravaged every quarter of the country. Wallace, with a small body of troops, continually harrassed his march, and revenged the calamities of Scotland on the English soldiers that straggled from the main body of their army. That dauntless and determined patriot being at last betrayed by a pretended friend, who is said to have been bribed by the English, was delivered up to Edward, who, considering him as the author of the revolt, resolved to strike terror into others by his punishment. This champion of liberty was tried, condemned, and executed as guilty of treason; his head was placed on London bridge, and his four quarters were sent to be exposed in four of the

* Baliol was permitted to retire to his estate in Normandy, where he spent the remainder of his days. Rapin I. p. 392.

principal towns of Scotland.* Such was the tragical exit of the celebrated Wallace, whom the Scottish historians have equalled to the greatest heroes of antiquity. But according to the general accounts, his valour, like that of the heroes of Homer, was tinged with cruelty; and this blemish in his character, although it may in part be ascribed to the barbarism of the age, diminishes the compassion which the remembrance of his fate might otherwise excite. But as a counterbalance to this instance of severity towards an implacable enemy, Edward treated favourably such as surrendered; perceiving that rigorous treatment only excited revolt, and instead of confiscating their whole property, as in his former expeditions, he permitted them to redeem their lands, by a pecuniary fine, without being liable to imprisonment or any other penalty.† This lenity was not without its effects: The Scottish barons, finding no other remedy, were glad to accept such favourable terms, and readily acknowledged Edward as their sovereign.

This fourth conquest of Scotland appeared to be so complete, that the king apprehending no further trouble from that quarter, and

* M. West. p. 451.

† Vide Dr. Brady, p. 78.

being, at the same time, in perfect union with France, considered himself as fully at leisure to attend to the internal regulation of his kingdom, and to compel the English barons to respect his authority, for which some of them seemed to have little regard. The abuses which had crept into the administration of justice, also claimed his attention : bribery had again become common ; and in order to extirpate this evil, he erected an extraordinary court to inquire into the conduct of judges and magistrates ; and punished the guilty by heavy fines and penalties. So far, indeed, was Edward from suffering either riches or rank to screen any delinquent from justice, that his own son, prince Edward, having committed a misdemeanor in breaking down the fences of a park belonging to the bishop of Litchfield, he caused him to be imprisoned like a common offender. But while the king paid a laudable attention to the administration of justice, he seemed, on other occasions, to aim at an undue extension of the royal prerogative. On the accession of his friend Clement V. to the pontifical chair, Edward made use of his interest with the new Pope, to obtain a dispensation from his oath in regard to the charters of liberties. Being now in full pos-

A. D. 1305.

session of martial fame and popular esteem, and assured of the support of the Roman see, he began to assume a greater authority than had been exercised by his predecessors; and many parts of his conduct have given occasion to suppose that he intended the establishment of an absolute monarchy. A prince of such acknowledged abilities in government and war, and supported by the papal authority, might, perhaps, have attained his object; but whatever were his designs, another revolution, which suddenly took place in Scotland, prevented their execution.

Although the subjugation of that kingdom had seemed to be complete, yet, amidst the mountains and morasses of the interior, there were several impenetrable retreats which afforded a sanctuary to those desperate patriots, with whom the disdain of a foreign yoke was superior to every other consideration, and whose inflexible resolution greatly contributed to restore the independence of their country. In the mean while, Robert Bruce, son of that Robert Bruce who had been a candidate for the crown, and to whom it had been afterwards promised by Edward in reward for his aid against Baliol, began to aspire to royalty. It may generally be observed, that, among the great, views of

ambition and private interest often assume the garb of patriotism. Bruce had faithfully served Edward, and assisted him in subjugating Scotland, in the hope that the English monarch would, one day, fulfil his promise, and place him on the throne. But when he plainly perceived that this expectation was vain, he formed the grand design of obtaining the crown by delivering his country from servitude. For this purpose he entered into a confederacy with Comyn, another Scotch lord of great credit and influence, and the plan being arranged, Bruce came to London in order to confer with other noblemen, of the same nation, who were then at the English court.* Comyn, through some motives which historians have not been able to develope, discovered the whole affair to the king, who might instantly have seized Bruce, had he not been afraid of missing his accomplices, by acting with too great precipitancy. He therefore caused Bruce to be narrowly watched, while he hoped, from his communications with Comyn, to make further discoveries. Bruce, being apprized of the treachery of Comyn, and of his own danger, escaped from

* It is to be observed, that this was not Comyn the regent; but another lord of that name.

London, and proceeding to Scotland, with a celerity that defied all pursuit, repaired to Dumfries, where, meeting with Comyn, in the church of the Cordeliers, he instantly stabbed him with his own hand.* After this bold stroke, knowing that he could have no hope of safety but in success, he publicly declared his intentions. The people, from all parts of the kingdom, flocked in such crowds to his standard, that he soon saw himself at the head of a numerous army, and being sensible that the regal title would add to his influence and authority, he went to

March 25th,
A. D. 1306.

Scone, where he was solemnly crowned. The first efforts of the new king were unsuccessful. Audemar de Valence, earl of Pembroke, being sent with an army into Scotland, while the king was mustering his whole force at Carlisle, Bruce was defeated by that general in two successive engagements;† and finding himself unable to keep the field, he retired to the Hebudes to wait for a more favourable juncture.

Soon after the flight of Bruce, Edward entered Scotland with a numerous army.

* A romantic story of an enigmatical present of a pair of spurs being sent him, by a friend, to indicate the necessity of a speedy escape, is related by historians. It appears that the account given by Buchanan is not accurate. Vide Tyrrel, 4. p. 168.

† Vide Buchanan, lib. 8.

Finding no enemies to encounter, as the Scots were in a state of consternation, and their troops entirely dispersed, he sent out detachments on every side in order to seize Bruce's adherents, of whom great numbers were taken, and felt the inflexible severity of the conqueror. Three brothers of the new king lost their lives on the scaffold. His queen, with many of the principal lords, among whom were the bishops of St. Andrew and Glasgow, were sent to different prisons in England. The earl of Athol, who was allied by blood to Edward, as well as to the royal family of Scotland, was honoured with a mark of distinction in being hanged on a gallows of extraordinary height. The countess of Buquhan, who placed the crown on the head of Robert Bruce, was exposed in a wooden cage on the walls of Berwick castle. Her sister underwent the same fate at Roxborough. The estates and effects of most of the other revolters were confiscated.* The inexorable Edward, after so many provocations and disappointments, was deaf to all solicitations for mercy.

The king of England having thus taken vengeance on the Scots, who had rejected his

* Vide Rymer's *Fœd.* Tom. 2. p. 1012, &c.

authority, passed the winter at Carlisle, where he held the last parliament of his reign. By the advice of this parliament he banished Piers Gaveston, a young man, of Guienne, of a profligate life, who had gained an undue ascendancy over the prince of Wales, and was accused of corrupting his morals by drawing his attention from the affairs of government to scenes of debauchery. The prince bound himself by an oath never to recal this profligate favourite; and Gaveston himself also swore that he would never more set foot in England, on which condition a hundred marks per annum were allowed him for a pension. The history of the following reign will shew that it would have been happy for both had they punctually adhered to these engagements.

While Edward was thus occupied at Carlisle, Robert Bruce issued from his retreat, and taking advantage of the severity of the winter, which prevented the English troops from acting, he assembled the remains of his dispersed army, which he soon saw augmented by fresh supplies of men from all quarters. Being thus reinforced, he attacked the earl of Pembroke, whom he totally defeated and made prisoner. After this victory he made a rapid progress, and retook many fortified

towns, which he dismantled to avoid the necessity of leaving garrisons. One revolution thus succeeding another, Edward determined to make the Scots a signal example of his vengeance, and to render them incapable of any future opposition to his authority. He summoned all the barons of his

kingdom to meet him at Carlisle,
A. D. 1307.

under the penalty of forfeiting their fees; and having assembled the finest army that England had ever seen, he declared his intention of desolating Scotland from sea to sea, and immediately prepared for carrying the terrible sentence into execution. But the decrees of providence were different from those of the king. Before he could begin the threatened infliction, he was seized by a distemper, which put an end to his life and his projects. Perceiving that his death was approaching, he sent for prince Edward, his son and successor, to whom he recommended a vigorous prosecution of the war till the Scots should be so completely subdued as never more to be able to revolt. For that purpose he ordered his bones to be carried at the head of the army, not doubting but they would strike terror into those enemies, over whom he had been so often victorious; and mixing with his barbarous

policy that superstitious piety, which was one of the characteristics of the age, he ordered his heart to be sent to Jerusalem, with thirty-two thousand pounds sterling, which he had provided for the support of the holy sepulchre. After these, his last orders, he caused himself to be carried into Scotland, being desirous of dying in a country which had so often been the theatre of his martial exploits, and expired at Burgh on the Sands, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, and the thirty-fifth of his reign.

July 7th,
A. D. 1307.

The majestic form and countenance of Edward corresponded with his vigorous mind and martial disposition. His hair was black, and naturally curled. His eyes, which were also black, sparkled with uncommon vivacity. He was taller by the head than the generality of men, and perfectly well shaped, except that his legs were too long in proportion to his body. The virtues which adorned his character were a dauntless courage, a solid judgment, an acute penetration, consummate prudence, exemplary chastity, and a perfect command over his passions. His vices were an exorbitant ambition, a vindictive spirit, and a total want of feeling for the miseries of mankind. But whatever may be said of his character as a man, he was a great king, and

England derived considerable benefits from his administration.

The reign of Edward I. derives a considerable lustre from the subjugation of Wales, a conquest highly beneficial to that country as well as to England. Both countries were delivered from those alternate incursions, which rendered the lives, as well as the property of the borderers, insecure; and the hostile frontier, which had, for the space of seven centuries, been the theatre of predatory war, was no longer distinguishable by marks of devastation. The conquest of Scotland, had it succeeded, would have been still more advantageous to the inhabitants of this island; and for ages afterwards, the failure of this project had a fatal effect on their interests. The greatest designs, when unsuccessful, are generally productive of effects directly opposite to those which the projectors had expected; and Edward's attempt upon Scotland, instead of uniting the two British nations, excited, between them, an implacable animosity, which it has been the work of ages to extinguish. If, however, the designs of Edward were not reconcileable to the principles of justice, they were founded on views of expediency, the first article of political creeds. But whatever may be said of the

foreign politics of Edward I. the equity of his internal administration forms one of the distinguishing features of his reign. Under former kings, the slightest offences of the people were severely punished by the sword or the gibbet, while the nobles compounded for their crimes by pecuniary fines, which fell on their poor dependents. But Edward treated all with equal severity; and by this impartiality as well as by his vigilance in discovering, and his strictness in punishing corrupt judges and magistrates, he cleansed the Augean stable of public justice. He has been accused of too great severity; but a statute, enacted in the thirteenth year of his reign, shews that a spirit of lenity was ill adapted to the profligate manners of that age. This statute, after a shocking recital of the murders, robberies, and riots, which frequently happened not only in the night, but also in the day-time, in the city of London, enacts, that none be found in the streets with either spear or buckler, after the ringing of the curfew bell of St. Martin-le-Grand, except they be great lords or persons of note: also, that no tavern be kept open after the ringing of that bell, under a penalty of forty pence.*

* *Ann. Hist. Comm.* 1. p. 243.

The statute and its preamble exhibit a disgusting picture of the manners of the British metropolis towards the end of the thirteenth century, although the number of its inhabitants could scarcely amount to one-tenth of its present population.

This reign is rendered truly interesting to posterity by the degree of power which the people began to assume during that period. The opulence of the lower orders has a natural tendency to raise them to freedom. An increasing luxury began to throw money into the hands of the traders and artizans, and obliged the nobles to mortgage, dismember, and alienate their estates. These alienations becoming so frequent as to threaten the destruction of the great families, the barons took the alarm, and devised the expedient of entails, in order to put a stop to the practice. But it was the policy of Edward to diminish the power and influence of the nobility; and in the eighteenth year of his reign an act was passed to authorize the alienation of landed property.* He considered the clergy and barons as rivals; and in order to counterbalance their force, he exalted the commons. It has indeed been

* Millar's Eng. Gov. 2. p. 191, &c.

supposed, that his design was to render himself absolute by popular support ; and some parts of his conduct seem to authorize such a conjecture. But at the time when he was beginning to throw off parliamentary restrictions, death put an end to his designs ; and he left to the people a share of authority which they ever after retained and gradually increased.

EDWARD II.



EDWARD II. ascended the throne with every advantage, amidst the universal applauses of his subjects. He was in the twenty-

third year of his age; and his
A. D. 1307. majestic presence, together with

the remembrance of his father's achievements, excited a general expectation of a happy and glorious reign. But his conduct soon blasted the hopes of the nation. In direct violation of his oath, he recalled Gaveston, and made him the greatest man in the kingdom. He gave him the Isle of Man, as well as the earldom of Cornwall, with the land that had fallen to the crown by the death of the late earl, son of Richard king of the Romans, and committed to his hands the entire administration of affairs, retaining for himself the bare title of king, while his favourite possessed all the power and exercised all the functions of royalty.

While the king thus gave himself up to the guidance of the corrupter of his youth, the

nobles of England were so highly exasperated, that they combined together to prevent his coronation. Edward finding himself unable to resist so general a confederacy, promised to grant them whatever they should require. The coronation therefore took place without opposition; but Gaveston was appointed to carry the crown, an honour which by ancient custom belonged to the princes of the blood royal. The solemnity was no sooner over than the king forgot his promise, and instead of dismissing his favourite, he conferred upon him new honours, and gave him his niece in marriage, with an ample portion, consisting of a number of manors and castles in England, besides lands in Guienne of the annual value of three thousand marks.* But the profuse folly of the monarch was scarcely more absurd than the insolent imprudence of the favourite, who had the ridiculous vanity to wear the king's jewels, and even his crown. Under the direction of such a minister, it could not be expected that the king should imbibe any sentiments of glory or virtue; and the court was filled with libertines, buffoons, and parasites, instead of prudent counsellors.

* Vide Rymer's *Fœd.* Tom. 3. p. 49, &c.

The barons more than ever incensed at the perfidy of the king and the insolence of the favourite, renewed the confederacy; and the two houses of parliament insisted in so positive a manner on the banishment of Gaveston, that the king found it in vain to resist their demand. But being obliged to part with his favourite, he converted even his exile into a new favour, by appointing him governor of Ireland, with very extensive authority. Gaveston was sensible that his absence from court could not fail of being fatal to his influence, and soon returned to England; where he appeared with extraordinary magnificence, attended by a numerous guard of foreigners, as if he intended to brave the nobility, whom he treated with the utmost contempt. The barons seeing themselves deceived by the king, and insulted by the favourite, resolved to adopt more vigorous measures. Having already discovered the weakness of the monarch, they judged him incapable of withstanding a peremptory requisition; and they were not mistaken in their conjecture. The parliament appointed a committee of seven bishops, eight earls, and six other barons, to make regulations not only for the government of the state, but also of the royal household; and the king gave his

consent to the measure.* Thus; by an easy condescension of which he did not foresee the consequences, and which had it not been for his imprudence would not have been required, he resigned into the hands of his subjects the government not only of the kingdom but even of his domestic affairs.

The members of this committee framed a set of new regulations, the chief of which were that the king should not have the disposal of any part of his revenue, but that it should be entirely under their management; that the great charter should be punctually observed, and that they alone should explain any difficulty that might arise in regard to the meaning of any of its articles. Nothing was mentioned concerning Gaveston; but when the lords of the committee saw that the king had, without asking their advice, made him governor of Nottingham, they issued a decree for his perpetual banishment; and in consequence of this sentence the favourite was obliged to quit the kingdom.

His exile was not of long duration. He was soon recalled by the sovereign, who sent

* Vide Dr. Brady, vol. 3. p. 102, &c. who gives the names of the prelates and earls.

circular letters through the kingdom, in order to justify his conduct. The lords, on the other hand, dispatched among the people emissaries, who by representing that the king was aiming to establish an arbitrary power, excited an universal discontent. The favourite was not less indiscreet than the monarch: instead of endeavouring to diminish the public odium, he conducted himself with increasing arrogance, and even presumed to use insulting language to the queen.

The barons being sensible of the danger of doing things by halves, resolved to take arms for the expulsion of the favourite. Having levied a considerable number of troops, they gave the command to the earl of Lancaster, while the king, who could not be ignorant of their preparations, instead of taking any measures either for reconciliation or resistance, employed his whole time with Gaveston in feasts and diversions. His supineness, which would appear almost incredible, encouraged the barons to hope that he might be easily surprised at York, where, in company with his favourite, he seemed to forget that the kingdom was rising in arms. Their approach, however, awaked him from his lethargy: he retired to Newcastle, and was rapidly pursued by the barons. But that

place not seeming capable of sustaining a siege, the king and his favourite made a precipitate retreat to Scarborough, and shut themselves up in the castle, which was esteemed one of the strongest fortresses in the kingdom. Their flight was so precipitate that they had no time to carry away any of their effects; and the barons, who entered Newcastle almost as soon as they had retired, found, among the baggage of Gaveston, a number of jewels belonging to the crown, of which they took an inventory. The king, who now saw the consequences of neglecting to prepare for the storm, left Gaveston at Scarborough, and departed for Warwickshire, in the vain hope that the people would crowd to his standard, and that he should soon collect a numerous army.

The earl of Lancaster detached the earls of Pembroke and Warren to lay siege to Scarborough castle, which was so ill provided with things necessary for defence, that notwithstanding the strength of its situation, Gaveston found himself obliged to surrender.* He therefore capitulated on condition that he

* Scarborough castle is situated on a high rock, perpendicular from the sea, and joined to the town by a neck of land, which might easily be rendered inaccessible. In the fourteenth century, if well provided with necessaries, it might have been considered as impregnable.

should be conducted to the king, and be tried by his peers. The articles were disgracefully violated by the barons. Gaveston was seized by the earl of Warwick; and being, after a sham trial, condemned to suffer death by decapitation, the sentence was immediately executed.

Although the king was extremely incensed at the death of his favourite, yet being unable to avenge his fate, he found himself obliged to provide for his own safety by an accommodation with the barons. Through the mediation of the Pope's nuncio, and of the earls of Evreux and Gloucester, a treaty was concluded, and an amnesty granted. All parties appeared to be satisfied, and nothing was now thought of but the prosecution of the war against Scotland.

While England had been thrown into confusion by the weakness of her monarch, Scotland was daily acquiring new strength under the auspices of a courageous and vigilant king, who diligently improved the moments of leisure afforded by the death of Edward I. Robert Bruce, the restorer of the Scottish monarchy, was the greatest political and military genius of his age. Having suppressed the factions which divided his subjects, and united them all in the support of the national

independence, he not only recovered the best part of the kingdom, but carried his arms into England.

Edward I. would probably have completed the conquest of Scotland had not death put a sudden stop to his career. A violent fit of sickness prevented Robert Bruce from immediately profiting by the consternation with which the English were struck by that event. But the conduct of Edward II. who having advanced as far as Dumfries, returned abruptly to London, convinced the Scots that he did not inherit the martial qualities of his predecessor. At his departure, he conferred the command of the army on Comyn, a Scotch lord, a declared enemy of Bruce ; but the circumstance of his being a foreigner gave great umbrage to the English, especially as he did not possess any talents that could extinguish national prejudice. Comyn, however, attempted to derive some advantage from the sickness of Bruce, and advanced to the attack of the Scots, while he supposed their king to be incapable of commanding his army. The Scottish monarch, who was beginning to recover, but was still extremely weak, apprehending that a retreat might have a discouraging effect on the minds of his subjects, caused himself to be supported on horse-

back by two esquires, and having drawn up his army in order of battle, waited the approach of the enemy. The English were considerably superior in numbers, but their attack was so faintly made and so feebly supported, that they scarcely seemed to be the same men who had so often been victorious under Edward I. With the superiority of numbers and discipline on their side, they were totally defeated by an army of newly raised and untrained soldiers. After his defeat, Comyn retreated into England. The Scottish king ravaged the province of Argyle, which still remained subject to England, while his brother, Edward Bruce, gained another victory in the county of Galloway. These repeated disasters roused the king of England to action, and he led into Scotland a powerful army. But as he had taken no care for provisions, and as his antagonist had prudently carried off or destroyed whatever could be of use to the invaders, Edward was under the necessity of retiring without having performed any thing conducive to his honour or advantage. His retreat afforded Bruce an opportunity of reducing several places which the English still held in Scotland, and the troubles which happened in England on account of Gaveston, enabled

him to extend his conquests and his ravages with great rapidity and success.

Such had been the disastrous events of the contest between England and Scotland, while the disputes between the king and his barons had prevented the English from making any considerable efforts against their foreign enemies. But the internal tranquillity of the kingdom was no sooner restored than vast preparations were made for carrying on the war against Scotland. Edward, re-resolving to make a grand effort, summoned all his vassals to take the field with their troops, and borrowed money of all the bishops and monasteries in the kingdom.* His subjects obeyed with alacrity, and in the month

A. D. 1314. of June he saw himself at the head of a hundred thousand English, Gascons, Welsh, and Irish, who promised themselves an easy victory, and devoured in imagination the spoils of a conquered kingdom. The grand contest between England and Scotland, which had continued so long, was now to be decided. The formidable army of Edward entering Scotland, advanced within view of Sterling. Near the small river of Bannockburn, the Scottish monarch,

* Rymer's Fœd. tom. 3. p. 432.

at the head of thirty thousand men, inured to war and accustomed to victory, waited, in an advantageous position, the approach of the English. One of his flanks was covered by a mountain composed of a mass of inaccessible rocks, and the other was secured by a deep morass. Notwithstanding the inferiority of their numbers, the Scots, being determined to conquer or die, soon threw their enemies into confusion. This was the most terrible

July 25th,
A. D. 1314.

defeat that England had sustained since the Norman conquest. The Scotch historians estimate the loss of the English at fifty thousand men, and assert that the number of prisoners exceeded that of the conquerors. According to their relations many of the principal English barons and above seven hundred knights lay dead on the field of battle. The English writers give a totally different account, stating their loss at only ten thousand men, including a considerable number of barons, and they compute the total amount of earls, barons, and knights, killed and taken prisoners, at only one hundred and fifty-four.* Such are the different statements of historians led into error by misinformation or blinded by national vanity.

* Walsingham, p. 105.

But amidst the doubtful and discordant accounts of military operations, consequences are the surest criterion of the magnitude of success or misfortune; and those of the battle of Bannockburn show that the victory of the Scots was the most decisive that can be imagined. From that period the English seldom dared to face them in the field, and it was evident that the genius of Edward I. no longer presided over their arms. His degenerate son inherited none of his virtues, and his enterprising spirit and martial abilities seemed to be transferred to the Scottish monarch, who pursued the vanquished English into their own country, and committed the most dreadful ravages, while Edward remained at York without daring to oppose his progress. The king of Scotland also sent his brother, Edward Bruce, into Ireland, who conquered the greatest part of that island, and had nearly established an independent throne, when he was defeated and slain in a battle, in which he had rashly engaged, with the archbishop of Dublin, who commanded the English forces.*

A. D. 1317.

The king of England seeing himself wholly unable to oppose the Scottish arms, solicited

* Walsing. p. 111.

the mediation of Rome, in order to procure a peace between the two kingdoms. John XXII. who then sat in the papal chair, was ready to seize so favourable an occasion of asserting his power over temporal princes, and readily granted Edward's request. He undertook the office of pacificator between England and Scotland, not as mediator but as a sovereign arbiter in virtue of his apostolical authority. He sent, for that purpose, two legates, who were empowered to conclude a peace between the contending nations, on such terms as they pleased to dictate. But as this would require some time, he ordered them to proclaim an immediate truce, and to denounce the penalty of excommunication against either of the princes that should refuse to desist from hostilities. Edward obeyed with alacrity the papal mandate, but Robert, considering the conduct of his Holiness as partial to England, refused his acquiescence, and continued his insurrections. The Scottish armies plundered and burned Northallerton, Boroughbridge, Scarborough, &c.* At length a truce was concluded, but Edward, equally imprudent and unfortunate in peace and in war, soon involved himself in new troubles.

A. D. 1319.

* Walsing. p. 112.

Hugh Spencer the younger, a nobleman of considerable accomplishments, had, by his insinuating address, found means to ingratiate himself with the king, and to hold the same place in his favour that Gaveston had formerly possessed. His elevation gave umbrage to the rest of the barons, and his haughtiness augmented their enmity. A powerful confederacy was formed ;* and the barons taking arms under Roger Mortimer, the younger, plundered the estates of the two Spencers, father and son. The king being unable to oppose the torrent, referred the matter to the parliament, and, at the next sitting, the two favourites were sentenced to exile.

Edward highly resented this proceeding, and resolved on vengeance. The queen, Isabella, who had received an affront from one of the barons, and was greatly offended at the insolence of the whole body, confirmed him in his vindictive determination. Having levied an army among the barons most attached to his interest, he marched suddenly against the confederate lords, took several of their castles, particularly those of Leeds and Warwick ; and when he thought himself

* For the persons engaged in this confederacy, vide Tytel 4. p. 279.

sufficiently strong, he recalled the two Spencers from banishment, and their enemies were exposed to a bloody proscription.* Some of the confederate barons submitted to the king's mercy, others fled into foreign countries, and many were taken and executed or shut up in prisons. The earl of Lancaster, with a few of his adherents and the troops that were able to assemble, retired towards Scotland, where he had been promised protection and support. But his designs being discovered, he was pursued and made prisoner, together with ninety-five barons and knights. Being conducted to the castle of Pontefract, he was tried by the Spencers and their adherents, who condemned him to death, and immediately carried the sentence into execution.† Nine other lords of his party were executed at York, and four at London, Windsor, Canterbury, and Gloucester. The scaffolds of England streamed with the blood of her nobles; a number of knights were hanged in chains, and others, deemed less guilty, recovered their liberty on the payment of fines.

* The younger Spencer had, during his exile, employed himself in piracy, cruising chiefly against the English. Rapin, vol. 1. p. 396.

† Walsing. p. 116. The earl of Lancaster was grandson of Henry III. and cousin germain to the king. He was regarded by the people as a martyr to liberty, and, at the solicitation of Edward III. was canonized by the Pope.

The successes of Edward against his subjects, induced him once more to try the fortune of arms against Scotland, in the hope of effacing his former disgrace. But his improvidence rendered abortive all his designs. Instead of growing wiser from experience, he repeated the error which had once before obliged him to make a precipitate retreat from that kingdom. Having advanced a second time into Scotland, without making any provision for the wants of his army, he soon found himself under the necessity of returning to England without ever bringing the Scots to an action. But this was not the only disaster that attended his ill-planned expedition. The Scottish monarch pursued him into his own territories, and overtaking him at Blackmore, captured all his baggage. The English army being, on this occasion, dispersed, Bruce continued his desolating march. He destroyed the country with fire and sword to the walls of York, burned the monastery of Ripon, pillaged the abbey of Beverley, and after extending his ravages from the Tweed almost to the Humber, returned to Scotland laden with spoils. Notwithstanding these successes, Bruce, in order to give some respite to his kingdom, exhausted by a war of so long duration, as well as to obtain absolution from

the papal anathema, consented to a truce for fourteen years, which put a stop to the hostilities between the two nations.

Edward seemed now to have nothing to interrupt his tranquillity or his pleasure; but his weakness, the ambition of his favourites, and the licentiousness of his consort, produced a train of calamities more grievous than any of those that he had hitherto experienced. The two Spencers now ruled the kingdom without control, and had they been contented with a moderate use of their power, they might have maintained themselves in their high elevation. But their hatred to all those by whom they had been opposed was implacable, and notwithstanding the number of victims whom they had sacrificed to their vengeance, they considered it as incomplete without the destruction of three of their most inveterate enemies, the bishops of Hereford and Lincoln, and Roger Mortimer, the last of whom was already a prisoner in the Tower. The bishop of Hereford was impeached of treason, but the power of the church, and the menace of excommunication, screened him, as well as the bishop of Lincoln, from royal and ministerial vengeance. Mortimer was twice condemned to death, and as

often pardoned. His good fortune has been ascribed to the intercession of the Queen, whose connexion with that young nobleman, although hitherto unknown and apparently unsuspected, is supposed to have taken place before his imprisonment.* But the crimes of corrupt and licentious courts can scarcely be regarded as worthy of historical investigation. It suffices, therefore, to say, that Mortimer found means to make his escape from the Tower, and took refuge in France. Isabella being sent shortly after to Paris, to settle certain disputes between Edward and her brother, Charles the Fair, king of France, her intrigues opened a scene introductory to a revolution in England. For this purpose it was requisite to draw prince Edward, her son, to Paris, under the pretext of doing homage to the French monarch for Guienne and Ponthien, ceded to him by his father. This expedient succeeded. But after the prince had performed his homage at Paris, the king, his father, sent orders to him to return immediately to England. The command, however, was neglected. Isabella, in the mean while, commenced, or more probably only renewed,

* Rapin enters into a long discussion of this subject, and supposes that nothing but the intercession of Isabella could have saved Mortimer from the rage of the Spencers. Vol. 1. p. 397.

an intimate connexion with Mortimer. She also caused her brother to inform Edward, that he could not suffer her and the prince to return home without some security against the ill treatment which she apprehended from the Spencers. While she was taking her measures at Paris, for the accomplishment of her designs, her friends, in England, were forming a party in her favour. This, indeed, was not difficult. The affections of the barons were completely alienated by the late executions; and Henry of Lancaster, brother of the earl that was lately beheaded, with the bishops of Hereford and Lincoln, being the determined enemies of the Spencers, soon saw themselves at the head of a powerful confederacy.

How desirous soever the French monarch might be to support the cause of his sister, he was either unwilling to be seen in the affair, or bribed by the Spencers to refuse her his assistance.* She was, therefore, obliged to apply to the count of Hainault, and having concluded a treaty of marriage between her son prince Edward and his daughter Philippa,

* Froissart, an author of distinguished credit, asserts that this was the case, *chron.* 1. chap. 8. Hennault says Edward had gained the French king; but his expressions, on this subject, are obscure. Vide *Hen. Ab. Chron.* ed. Am.

she procured from him a body of troops, consisting of about three thousand men, under the command of his brother John of Hainault.

September 22d,
A. D. 1326. With these she landed in Suffolk, where she was joined by Henry of Lancaster and several other barons. The enemies of the Spencers were, at the same time, busily employed in levying troops in every part of the kingdom. Thus the queen saw her army daily augmented by the accession of force from all quarters, while the king was almost universally deserted.

In this extremity the unfortunate monarch resolved to leave the elder Spencer in Bristol, and to retire to Ireland, where he hoped to levy an army. But his plans proved abortive. Bristol was taken after a faint resistance, and Spencer, the father, who was ninety years of age, was instantly hanged in his armour, without the formality of a trial. The citizens of London about the same time declared for the queen, and beheaded the bishop of Exeter, whom the king had appointed governor of the capital. Edward was prevented by contrary winds from effecting his escape into Ireland, and concealed himself in the abbey of Neath, where he was discovered and made prisoner with the younger Spencer, the chancellor Baldoc,

Simon de Reading, and a few domestics. Spencer was hanged on a gibbet fifty feet high, and Simon de Reading, only ten feet lower. The chancellor Baldoc being an ecclesiastic, was delivered to the bishop of Hereford, who conducted him to London, where he was massacred by the mob. The king was then obliged to resign the great seal ; and a parliament was called, in which, after an exhibition of various charges, he was formally deposed. The queen, dissembling her sentiments with all the artifice usual on similar occasions, complained of the rigour of the sentence, and burst into tears. But these demonstrations of grief, which so ill corresponded with her known passion for Mortimer, and her measures for dethroning her husband, could impose on none who possessed the least penetration. The young prince, who was of a generous disposition, and not yet hackneyed in the route of political wickedness, displayed greater sincerity, and solemnly protested that he would not accept the crown without the consent of the king his father. This determination of the prince perplexed the measures of parliament ; and it was deemed necessary to depute twelve commissioners, at the head of whom were the bishops of Hereford and Lincoln, to engage

the king to make a voluntary resignation of the crown in favour of his son. The two bishops employed a variety of arguments to convince him that the measure was adopted for his own good, and that their only desire was to ease him of the cares and troubles of royalty, in order to enable him to pass the remainder of his days in a happy tranquillity; but, perceiving that their exhortations made little impression on the monarch, they concluded with a menace, that, in case of refusal, not only his own condition should be rendered more miserable, but his whole family should be excluded from the throne. The unfortunate monarch, seeing no remedy, was obliged to comply with the demand, and after having reigned nineteen years six months and fifteen days, formally resigned his crown to his son.

Thus ended the weak and inglorious reign of Edward II. a reign which had not produced any event of national benefit, and was characterized only by the corruption of the court, the intrigues of the queen, the quarrels between the crown and the barons, and the abundant effusion of noble blood. Among the numerous victims of the reciprocal vengeance of parties, very few were deserving of pity. Each faction, in the hour of suc-

cess stained its cause by acts of cruelty ; and when those who had been so prodigal of the blood of their opponents, were, in their turn, brought to the scaffold, their fate could only be considered as a just retribution.

EDWARD III.



EDWARD III. was only in the fourteenth year of his age when he succeeded ^{Jan. 20th, A.D. 1327.} to the throne of his father.* The parliament established a regency, but the queen found means to seize on the government, and committed the exercise of its powers to her favourites. Roger Mortimer, who possessed her tenderest affections, executed the office of prime minister, and governed the kingdom with an absolute sway. Thus the English nation saw its sceptre transferred from the hand of a weak and imprudent prince to that of a minor king, under the direction of a mother enslaved by her passions, and a young and inexperienced minister. The parliament, however, being devoted to the queen, manifested the most perfect compliance with her will, and passed successive acts, reversing all the judgments passed in the foregoing reign, and justifying all the proceedings against the dethroned monarch.

* Edward III. was crowned at Westminster on the 26th January, 1327.

England was at this time at peace with all her neighbours; but her tranquillity was suddenly interrupted by an incursion of the Scots. The Scottish monarch, Robert Bruce, though far advanced in years and in an ill state of health, resolved not to suffer the minority of the king of England to pass without turning it to his advantage. In this view he broke the truce, which subsisted between the two nations, and sent the earl of Murray and Sir James Douglas with an army of twenty thousand men to ravage the English borders. Edward, on receiving this intelligence, was desirous of signaling himself against the invaders of his country; and the ministers, apprehensive of incurring the public displeasure by a contrary conduct, encouraged his design. An army of sixty thousand men was levied, including the troops which John of Hainault had conducted to England, and the young monarch placed himself at its head. The banks of the Wear, in the county of Durham, were the theatre of a series of marches and countermarches, the Scots occupying the northern the English the southern side. The Scottish generals constantly chose such advantageous positions that the English, notwithstanding the great superiority of their numbers, never dared to force the passage of

the river.* At length the Scots suddenly retired to their own country; and Edward, having nothing further to fear from their attempts, returned to York, where he disbanded his army and sent John of Hainault back to his own country with magnificent presents.

During these transactions the dethroned monarch was confined in the castle of Kenilworth, where he languished in melancholy solitude without being permitted to have any amusement. He frequently wrote to the queen, earnestly entreating her to render his imprisonment less rigorous; but nothing could move that inexorable princess in favour of a husband whom she herself had reduced to that deplorable condition, and who had not deserved, at least from her hands, such cruel usage. She would never permit the king, her son, to visit his unfortunate father, and although the imprisoned monarch ardently desired to see them both, and frequently asked why they were so unkind as to deny him that favour, he could never obtain an interview.

* Whoever is acquainted with the Wear will be astonished that twenty thousand Scots could prevent an English army of sixty thousand men from effecting the passage of that narrow and shallow river, which, in the summer season, the time when this expedition took place, is almost every where fordable. Rapin says the ill success of this campaign was ascribed to Mortimer, and circumstances render the charge highly probable. Rapin, vol. 1. p. 407.

The rigorous treatment of this unfortunate king began to excite compassion in the breasts of the people; and the irregular conduct of the queen, together with the power and arrogance of Mortimer, increased the general murmur. Henry of Lancaster, to whom the custody of the captive king had been committed by parliament, being impelled by generosity and compassion, endeavoured to mitigate his rigorous destiny, but the too open avowal of his sentiments proved fatal to the royal captive. The queen and Mortimer began to be apprehensive that Lancaster was forming some project for the deliverance and restoration of the deposed king, and in consequence of this suspicion they resolved to take him out of his hands, and commit him to the custody of keepers devoted to their will. Sir John Maltravers and Sir Thomas Gurney, two men of such a disposition as perfectly corresponded with the views of their employers, were ordered to convey him from Kennelworth to Berkley castle, which was to be his last prison. On the way they treated him with the greatest indignity. They conducted him on horseback in the night thinly clothed and exposed to the weather, with his head uncovered, and in order to prevent his being known by any persons, whom they might meet on the road, they

shaved him with cold water taken from a ditch. On suffering these reiterated indignities the unfortunate monarch burst into tears, exhibiting a wretched spectacle of fallen majesty. His enemies imagined that these hardships, with the fatigue of his journey, would put an end to his life; but the strength of his constitution defeated their expectation, and he was destined to close the lamentable scene by severer sufferings. Maltravers and Gurney having lodged him in Berkley castle, soon received their orders from the court, and as the execution required the utmost secrecy, they devised an expedient unparalleled in the annals of human cruelty.

A. D. 1327. Seizing him in his bed they stopped his mouth with a pillow, and thrust a pipe of horn up his fundament, through which they ran a red-hot iron into his bowels. In order to conceal this horrible action, the barbarous executioners sent for some persons from Bristol and Gloucester, who, on examining the body, and perceiving no marks of violence, concluded that he had died a natural death, and their depositions formally attested were immediately published throughout the whole kingdom.

Notwithstanding the caution which those barbarians had used, the cries of the king had been heard at a distance. A belief that

he had been murdered became universally prevalent; and so far were the regicides from receiving the reward which they expected, that their employers, in order to screen themselves from the imputation of guilt, becoming their persecutors, they saw themselves abandoned by all, and in order to avoid punishment, escaped out of the kingdom.*

The disgusting scenes which marked the reign of Edward II. have already been noticed; and nothing can be said in favour of his character. His person was majestic, and his constitution robust; but the qualities of his mind were far from corresponding with his bodily advantages. It may, however, be justly observed, that he was weak rather than wicked, and that he suffered for the crimes of his ministers rather than his own, a circumstance which ought to afford a perpetual lesson to monarchs. But when we consider the horrible manner in which this unfortunate prince terminated his life, humanity will be moved with compassion, and impartial history will confess that his suffer-

* About three years afterwards, Garney was seized at Burgos, in Spain, and was sent, by order of the king of Castile, to Bayonne, from whence Edward III. commanded him to be brought to England. But by some secret practices he was murdered in his passage, lest he should discover the great persons under whom he had acted. Maltravers spent his days in some unknown exile. Rapsin 1. p. 408.

ings greatly exceeded the measure of his guilt.

Every thing relating to this horrid tragedy was carefully concealed from the young king, who was made to believe that the death of his father was natural; and whatever scruples he might have had in regard to assuming the sceptre, they were removed by this event, which rendered his right indisputable. But his mother and Mortimer still held the reins of government. His marriage with Philippa of Hainault was solemnized at York, in pursuance to the treaty which his mother had concluded at Valenciennes; and the new queen was soon after crowned with the usual ceremonies.

These affairs were no sooner transacted than a parliament was assembled, and a peace was concluded with Scotland. The queen and Mortimer regarded war as contrary to their interests; and the parliament being wholly devoted to their service, complied with all their desires. On the other hand, the Scottish monarch, Robert Bruce, being warned by age and infirmities of his approaching dissolution, was desirous of leaving his son David, who was then only seven years old, in possession of a peaceable kingdom. An affair so conformable to the

views of all the contracting parties, was easily concluded; and the treaty of peace was confirmed by the marriage of David with Joanna, the sister of Edward, although they were both of them children. The conditions were wholly in favour of Scotland; and Edward, with the consent of his parliament, resigned all his pretensions to that kingdom.*

March 1st.
A. D. 1328. At the same time, all the charters and instruments that might prove the sovereignty of the English monarchs over Scotland, were given up, and the crown, sceptre, and other regalia, belonging to that kingdom, were restored, on condition that the Scottish monarch should pay the sum of thirty thousand marks as a compensation for all these restitutions. Shortly after the conclusion of the treaty, Mortimer was made earl of March, in full parliament, as a reward for his services.

A peace so disadvantageous to England was greatly disapproved by the people, and some of the barons declared themselves hostile to the queen's administration. But by the prudent advice of the archbishop of Canterbury, a reconciliation took place, and the fatal consequences of civil commotions were

* Rym. Fœd. 4. p. 337.

avoided. Mortimer, now earl of March, supported by the queen's mother, acted more like a sovereign than a minister. He disposed of all offices, as well as of the public revenue ; and his arrogance, as well as his authority, rendered him odious to the nobility. Edmund, earl of Kent, the king's uncle, had inconsiderately joined with the queen in dethroning his brother ; but the licentious conduct of that princess, and the arrogance of the favourite, had convinced him too late of his error. The freedom with which he declared his sentiments, induced them to resolve on his destruction, which they accomplished by one of the most extraordinary stratagems that ingenious wickedness could devise.* Agents, employed for that purpose, succeeded by a series of almost unparalleled artifices, in persuading him that the report of the death of his brother, Edward II. was a fiction, and that he was still alive in Corfe castle. They then proposed a plan for his deliverance and restoration, to which the earl readily acceded, and thus found himself engaged in a fictitious scheme of treason and rebellion, while those with

* See the whole detail in Rapin's Hist. with Tindal's Notes l. p. 410.

whom he supposed himself to be acting in concert, had no other end in view than his ruin. As soon as sufficient proofs could be produced, the too credulous prince was arrested, brought to trial, condemned, and executed; and thus fell a victim to the duplicity and vengeance of a corrupt and intriguing court.

During these transactions in England, the events which took place at the court of France, were preparing an occasion for the future display of Edward's martial abilities. Charles the Fair dying in the month of February, 1328, without male issue, and leaving his queen pregnant, a dispute arose between the king of England and Philip, son of the count de Valois, concerning the regency. Edward claimed that honour as nephew and nearest relative of the deceased king, although his descent was by the female line.* Philip founded his right on the Salique law, which, as he asserted, excluded the descendants of females, as well as the females themselves, from the regal succession, and in consequence from the regency. The question was decided by the peers of France in favour of Philip.

* His mother, Isabella, was daughter of Philip the Fair, and sister of Charles the Fair, the late king.

Edward complained to his parliament of the injury done to his rights; but it was not thought requisite to involve the kingdom in a war to support his claim to a regency which was soon to expire. This question, however, involved another of infinitely greater importance. If the pregnancy of the widowed queen should produce a daughter instead of a son, the pretensions to the regency would then be converted into a claim to the throne.

A period of uncertain expectation was terminated by the birth of a princess. In consequence of this event Philip de Valois ascended the throne of France, in virtue of the judgment that had given him the regency. Edward claimed the crown by his ambassadors; but they could not obtain a hearing; and the English monarch, not being in a state to support his pretensions, judged it expedient to conceal his designs until a more favourable opportunity. But from this moment he began to form such alliances as might be of use in the execution of his great project, to which all his measures were in some degree subservient. The concealment of his designs was so necessary, that being summoned by Philip to do homage for the dukedom of Guienne and the earldom of Ponthien, the king of England

A. D. 1329.

thought proper to comply, and went for that purpose to Amiens, having previously made, before his council, a protestation, that by this act he did not intend to renounce his hereditary right to the crown of France.*

The king was no sooner returned to England, than he resolved to free himself from the bondage in which he had hitherto been held by the queen and Mortimer. When it was perceived that he grew weary of the guardianship of his mother and the favourite, their enemies resolved to take advantage of this disposition, in order to accomplish their ruin. They caused him to observe the power and splendour of the earl of March, who disposed of all public offices to his creatures, and affected to outshine his sovereign in magnificence. They also informed him of the tragical exit of his father, and developed the secret practices by which his uncle, the earl of Kent, had been brought to the scaffold. All this information was new to the king, who had hitherto been kept in the dark: his eyes were now for the first time opened to the state of affairs; and he resolved to punish the authors of those evils which had so long afflicted the kingdom. The court

* P. Daniel, tom. 4.—Rymer's Fœd. tom. 4.—Tind. notes on Rapa, vol. 1. p. 412. Note 3.

being at Nottingham, where the parliament was to meet, the queen and the earl of March lodged in the castle with a guard of a hundred and eighty knights, while the king, with a slender retinue, had his quarters in the town. From these circumstances it appears that the queen and the favourite were under some apprehensions. Their precautions did not ensure their safety. Edward, having gained the governor, entered the castle by a subterraneous passage, now called Mortimer's hole, and proceeded to his mother's apartments, accompanied by several officers. The knights, who composed the guard, made only a feeble resistance, and notwithstanding the cries and entreaties of the queen to spare "the gentle Mortimer," the minister was seized in her presence and conducted to the Tower of London.

The affair having succeeded to his wish, Edward dissolved the parliament which had been entirely devoted to the interests of the queen and the favourite; and in summoning another, exhorted the people to chuse representatives who, without any attachment to persons or parties, would have no other object than the welfare of the state. The new parliament met at London with dispositions very different from those

Nov. 25th,
A. D. 1330.

of the former. The reformation of abuses was the great object in view. The king signified his intention of assuming the reins of government; and the parliament declared its entire approbation of the measure. He resumed all the grants made during his minority;* and having reduced the exorbitant dowry of the queen, his mother, to a pension of three thousand pounds per ann. he confined her to her castle at Rising, in order to prevent her intrigues from exciting new troubles in the state.† As for the earl of March, although his impeachment was brought before parliament, he was condemned without being heard, in the same manner as he had treated the Spencers, and was executed on the common gallows at Tyburn.

Edward having rectified the abuses that had disgraced his minority, and regulated the internal government of his kingdom, was now at leisure to attend to his foreign concerns. He was young, ardent, and enterprising; and France and Scotland presented two extensive fields for the display of his martial genius. He had in view the conquest of both these

* Rym. Fœd. 4. p. 476.

† The king afterwards assigned her the earldom of Ponthien and Montreuil during her life. Fœd. 4. p. 623. Isabella lived 28 years in her confinement.

kingdoms; but as it would have been extremely dangerous to attack them both at the same time, he resolved to begin with Scotland. David, the Scottish king, who was yet a minor, was brother-in-law to Edward; but it is well known that affinity is only a feeble barrier against ambition. The English monarch knowing that a civil war among the Scots would greatly facilitate the reduction of their kingdom, represented to Edward Baliol, the son of John Baliol, who had been placed on the throne and afterwards deposed by Edward I. that the minority of David afforded him a fair opportunity for reviving the claims of his family.* To these suggestions he added an offer of his assistance to enable him to ascend the throne of his ancestors. Baliol readily gave ear to the flattering proposal. A treaty was speedily concluded, as Baliol thought that he could not too dearly purchase a crown to which he could not have aspired without a powerful support; and Edward, who intended to reap all the fruit of the enterprise, promised more than could have been expected. Edward

* This prince was then in an obscure retreat in France: thirty-eight years had elapsed since his father was dethroned, and he little expected to be supported by the king of England in asserting his claim to the crown of Scotland.

did not publicly engage in the undertaking, but the English nobility were privately encouraged to enter into the service of Baliol; and numbers of those who had received lands in Scotland from the bounty of Edward I. but had lost them at the revolution in that kingdom, attached themselves to his party. While Baliol was making his preparations, Edward pretended punctually to observe his treaty with Scotland, and even published a proclamation against such of his subjects as engaged in the service of Baliol, when it was too late to prevent them, expecting by this political duplicity to make the world believe that he had no concern in an enterprise of which he was the author.

Baliol having completed his preparations entered Scotland.* His progress was extremely rapid, and having gained four successive victories, great numbers of the Scottish barons made their submission and took the oath of fealty. David was obliged to fly with the queen into France. Baliol was crowned at Scone, the usual place of the inauguration of the kings of Scotland, and immediately after did homage to Edward, with all the ceremonies denoting an entire subjection.

* His army consisted only of 2,500 Englishmen. Rapin l. p. 414.

He also ceded to the king of England the town and castle of Berwick, which were yet in the hands of David.

The success of the enterprise induced Edward to throw off the mask. He commenced his operations with the siege of Berwick, and the regent, to whom David had confided the government of Scotland, made every possible exertion for its relief. Having levied an army he advanced towards Berwick. The king of England waited his approach at Halydown hill, where was fought a bloody battle, which terminated in the total discomfiture of the Scotch army. If we may believe the English historians, seven Scotch earls, with nine hundred knights, four thousand gentlemen, and thirty-two thousand common soldiers were slain. The Scottish writers acknowledge the loss of only ten thousand, which must be much nearer the truth. Thus does national vanity, in exaggerating the accounts of victory or defeat, of advantage or loss, add to the errors of misinformation, and cause irretrievable confusion in history.

The victory at Halydown hill was followed by the surrender of Berwick, after which Edward returned to his own dominions, leaving with Baliol an army to complete the

conquest of Scotland. Strengthened by this aid he made a rapid progress, and held a parliament at Edinburgh, in which all the acts passed in the reign of Robert Bruce were annulled; the English lords recovered their lands in Scotland and Roxborough, Jedburg, Selkirk, Dumfries, and the castle of Edinburgh were put into the hands of the king of England as a recompense for his assistance. But these alienations, together with the homage which subjected their crown to that of England, exasperated the Scottish nobility, who suddenly took arms and drove Baliol out of the kingdom.

Edward no sooner received intelligence of this revolution, than he entered
A. D. 1334. Scotland with a numerous army, and penetrated without opposition to the northern provinces, while the Scottish armies carefully avoided a battle, and taking strong positions secured themselves from any attack.* Finding himself unable to bring them to action he returned to England, and after his retreat the Scottish general, Dunbar, retook

* Rapin says that Edward communicated to his parliament a project that he had formed of undertaking a croisade to the Holy Land, with the king of France and several other christian princes, vol. 1. p. 415. But when we consider his designs upon France, we cannot suppose that he ever seriously intended to undertake an expedition to Palestine,

several places. The winter put a stop to the operations of the English; but in the ensuing spring Edward attacked Scotland
A. D. 1335. by land and by sea, and advanced to the extremities of the kingdom; but as the northern parts could not be retained without leaving there a numerous army, he returned to Perth, while his brother, the earl of Cornwall, ravaged the western provinces. The greatest part of the Scots, considering any effectual resistance as utterly impossible, made a voluntary submission, and obtained very favourable terms. Edward now thinking Scotland completely subdued, ordered Perth, Edinburgh, and Sterling, to be strengthened with additional fortifications, and returned in triumph to England.

A part of the nation was determined never to submit to the yoke of England. The Scottish generals, Dunbar and Douglas, attacked the English army, commanded by the earl of Athol, to whom Edward had committed the government of the kingdom. The English, although superior in numbers, were totally defeated; and the earl himself was killed in the battle. This success reviving the courage of the Scots, they assembled from all quarters, and formed a very considerable army under the conduct of those

two generals, whose arms made a rapid progress. Edward, on receiving this intelligence, marched the fourth time into the heart of Scotland, and ravaged the revolted provinces in a merciless manner. Having reduced to ashes the town of Aberdeen and some others of less note, he again returned to England.

Edward considering the subjection of Scotland as nearly although not entirely completed, resolved not to suffer the war, with that kingdom, any longer to prevent the execution of his grand design of asserting, in arms, his pretensions to the crown of France. He had long been dazzled by that splendid object to which he had so plausible a claim, and he had long meditated its attainment, when an unexpected incident seems to have accelerated his attempt. Robert, count of Artois, being deprived of that earldom by a decision of the peers of France, who had adjudged the inheritance to Blanch, daughter of Philip the Long, was so highly exasperated as to use menacing words to the king.* For this offence he was summoned before the court of peers, and being condemned for non-

* Presid. Henault says, that Robert had endeavoured to assassinate the king and queen, and their eldest son, and afterwards to destroy them by witchcraft. Abreg. Chron.

appearance, the king confiscated all his estates. Robert, filled with indignation at this proceeding, retired to England, and as he had many friends in France, Edward might regard such a fugitive, at so critical a juncture, as no inconsiderable acquisition. And it is not improbable that the counsels of this prince might contribute to stimulate the English monarch to attempt the conquest of France.*

An enterprise of such magnitude required extraordinary preparations, and the support of various alliances which might counterbalance the superiority of France over England. Edward found means to attach to his interests the emperor Lewis of Bavaria, the duke of Brabant, the earls of Guelder and Hainault, his brothers-in-law, the archbishop of Cologne, and several other German princes. He also contracted for the private assistance of divers lords of Gascony, Flanders, Brabant, Holland, and Germany, who engaged to furnish supplies of men in proportion to

* Historians have generally considered Robert d'Artois as the author of this war, an opinion which Rapin confutes by unanswerable arguments. Vol. 1. p. 416.—The protestation of Edward, previous to his performance of homage, and indeed his whole conduct, shews that the object of the war was the prosecution of his claims to the crown of France. The presid. Henault, however, seems to consider the war as originating with Robert d'Artois. Vide *Abregé Chronolog. ad Annum.*

the sums which they were to receive. But the most advantageous alliance was that which Robert d'Artois procured him with James d'Arteville, a brewer of Ghent, who had excited the principal cities of Flanders to revolt against their earl. This man had acquired so great an influence over the Flemings, that he ruled them with an absolute sway. He banished all the lords whom he suspected of adhering to the interests of the earl: he had spies employed in every town, who denounced those whom they suspected of entertaining any designs against him; and he never walked the streets without being attended by a guard of sixty or seventy men, who, at the slightest signal, killed any person that he regarded as his enemy. With this powerful demagogue Edward contracted a strict alliance on the basis of mutual interest. The earl of Flanders had taken refuge in France, and Philip had promised to restore him to his former authority. Edward taking advantage of this circumstance, promised his protection to the Flemings, who were apprehensive of being attacked by Philip. This alliance was attended with great advantages to the English monarch, for besides the supplies which he expected from the Flemings, it afforded him the conveniency of assembling

in Flanders his forces from every part of the continent, and of opening a way into France from that country.

The parliament approving of the king's design, granted him liberal subsidies; and he raised one of the finest armies that had ever been levied in England. A part of it was immediately sent to assist the Flemings, who were vigorously attacked by the earl at the head of a French army. Soon after the arrival of the English troops, Guy, brother of the earl of Flanders, was defeated in the Isle of Cadzant, and taken prisoner. This success excited those cities of Flanders which had hitherto adhered to the earl to reject his authority, and enter into the alliance with England.

Edward and Philip employed the winter in making preparations for the important contest in which they were about to engage, each of them endeavouring, by specious pretexs and studied manifestoes, to prove the justice of his cause. Benedict XII. who then sat in the papal chair, used his influence with the two kings, in order to prevent the evils which their quarrel threatened to bring upon christendom, and sent for that purpose two cardinals to Edward, who professed himself willing to agree to a

peace on such terms as were compatible with his rights. But as the conditions which one of the parties might have thought strictly just, would, by the other, have been deemed inadmissible, their dispute could be decided only by arms.

Having completed his preparations, and taken all the precautions that prudence could suggest, Edward sailed from Orewell, July 15th, A. D. 1336. in Suffolk, with a fleet of five hundred ships, and steered directly for Antwerp, where he landed his army. From Antwerp he proceeded to Cologne, where he had a conference with the emperor. At this interview the two monarchs being seated on two thrones in the market-place, attended by four dukes, three archbishops, six bishops, and, according to the heralds' accounts, seventeen thousand barons, knights, and esquires,* the emperor, in the midst of this splendid assembly, appointed the king of England vicar of the empire, in order to furnish the German and Flemish princes and lords with a specious pretext for joining his standard as general of the imperial army. This dignity might heighten his influence on the continent, and his presence had a power-

* Barnes's life of Edward III. and Knighton's Collect. ap. Tindal's Notes on Rapin 1. p. 417.

ful effect in confirming his Flemish alliance; but he still laboured under great embarrassments through the want of money to defray the expenditure occasioned by the magnitude of his armaments. He borrowed money both of princes and private persons, and a modern reader will be astonished to learn that an English monarch was obliged to pledge his crown to the archbishop of Triers, for a loan of fifty thousand florins.*

The long period of a year and almost two months had been consumed amidst various and unavoidable delays, when Edward at Sept. 1st,
A. D. 1339. length opened the campaign at the head of forty thousand men. His first encampment was between Marchiennes and Doway: He then proceeded to Cambray, and while he halted before the walls of that city, he received information that Philip was approaching with a formidable army. Edward, whose pecuniary embarrassments obliged him to endeavour to bring the war to as speedy a termination as possible, immediately advanced to meet his antagonist. But Philip, who had no reason for acting with precipitancy, carefully avoided a battle; and the campaign ended without producing

* Rapin, vol. i. p. 418.

any remarkable event. In the meanwhile, Philip had, by the agency of his emissaries, excited among the Flemings some scruples on the subject of taking arms against their paramount sovereign, which might have produced a revolution prejudicial to the English. But Edward, sensible of the importance of names, readily adopted the sagacious counsel of d'Arteville, and assumed the title of king of France, and quartered the *fleurs de lis* with the arms of England, adding the motto "*Dieu et mon droit*," denoting his confidence in God, and the justice of his cause.

The campaign being ended, Edward saw the necessity of returning to England to procure supplies; but he left with the duke of Brabant, the queen, the new-born prince,* and several English lords of the first distinction. The parliament granted him liberal subsidies, and obtained a new confirmation of *Magna Charta*. The two kings issued new manifestoes, and redoubled their preparations for war. Edward having increased the strength of his fleet, and raised a

June 22, more numerous army, again em-
A. D. 1340. barked for Flanders. The French

* The famous Edward, the Black Prince, who was born at Woodstock, June 15th, 1330.

fleet, which was greatly superior in number of vessels, was stationed off Sluys to wait his approach.* Edward did not hesitate to begin the attack. The conflict was extremely obstinate and bloody. The ships of the two hostile fleets were for the most part closely grappled, and the engagement lasted from eight in the morning till seven at night. But although the French fought with great courage, and sustained for so many hours all the efforts of the English, yet, in the end, they were totally defeated with a prodigious slaughter. Of the whole French fleet no more than thirty ships escaped, and thirty thousand of their men are said to have perished in the action.† This was the severest naval engagement that ever had been fought in those seas, and the first in which an English king had ever commanded in person. Edward, however, displayed not only an extraordinary valour,

* The English fleet consisted of three hundred, and that of the French of four hundred sail. Rapin, i. p. 419. The presid. Henault and other French historians say that their fleet consisted of a hundred and twenty large ships, with forty thousand men on board.

† Rapin says "the English pretend that the French lost that number, from which it appears that he considers it as an exaggeration, vol. i. p. 419. The presid. Henault observes that this battle was lost through a misunderstanding between the two French admirals; but he allows, that in maritime war, the French were inferior to the English. Ab. Chron. ad An.

but a degree of skill which could not have been expected from his little experience in naval affairs.

After this signal victory, Edward having without further opposition disembarked his troops in Flanders, assembled the finest army that had ever been commanded by any king of England. It consisted of a hundred and fifty thousand men, English, Germans, Flemings, and French. This immense force being divided into two bodies, he laid siege to Tournay with a hundred thousand men, and detached Robert d'Artois with fifty thousand to take post near St. Omer.* But this body, which consisted chiefly of the Flemish militia, being defeated near that city by the duke of Burgundy, the soldiers were struck with such a panic, that in the following night they abandoned their camp, and while some joined the main army, others dispersed themselves in the country. Philip, with an army superior to that of Edward, was, at the same time, advancing to the relief of Tournay. He was accompanied by the king of Navarre and Bohemia, and by all the nobility of France. Notwithstanding the superiority of his force he declined a battle,

* For the transactions of this war, vide Froissart, lib. 1.

but never ceased, night or day, from harassing the besiegers by desultory attacks. The king of England perceiving that the capture of Tournay, in presence of the French army, would be extremely difficult, or even impossible, sent Philip a letter, with a challenge, to decide the quarrel by single combat, or by a hundred men on each side. But the letter being addressed to Philip de Valois, without any other title, he returned for answer that "He had seen a letter, addressed "to a person called Philip de Valois, but as "it was not for him, he could not reply to "the contents; nevertheless, he took this "occasion to acquaint him that he hoped, by "God's help, to drive him out of his kingdom."* The challenge sent by Edward is in the true spirit of chivalry, which was so prevalent in that age: it was also consistent with reason: their dispute was entirely personal, and all such quarrels ought to be decided by the parties themselves, or by a few chosen champions willing to devote their lives for their cause, without sacrificing the blood of so many thousands to the interests or ambition of individuals. And humanity must regret that Philip was furnished with a pre-

* Rymer's Fœd, Tom. 5. p. 199.

text for declining a contest which might have afforded a glorious example to monarchs, and a noble theme to historians.

Edward consumed three months before Tournay without making any progress, yet he considered his honour as concerned in continuing the siege, although with little hope of success, and exposed to the incessant attacks of the enemy. From this embarrassing situation he was relieved by his mother-in-law, the widow of the earl of Hainault, and sister to the French king, who, by her interference, prevailed on her brother and her son-in-law to consent to a truce for a few months, which was prolonged for two years by the mediation of the Pope. Various circumstances, indeed, contributed to induce the king of England to agree to this truce. It saved him from the disgrace of raising the siege of Tournay, and from the consequences that might arise from the defection of the duke of Brabant, who had drawn off his troops, and returned to a state of neutrality. The emperor soon after made a private peace with France, and revoked his patent of vicar of the empire, a circumstance which induced some of the German princes to secede from the league. But the principal cause that impelled Edward to interrupt the prosecution

of his designs against France was, the inadequacy of his resources to the undertaking, and the straits to which he found himself reduced by the want of money for the support of his numerous armies.

Nov. 30th,
A. D. 1340.

As soon as the truce was concluded, Edward returned to England. The war had succeeded so ill, that all his vast armaments had not gained him one foot of ground in the kingdom which he had expected to conquer. This consideration might have induced him to desist from any further attempt, had not an unforeseen circumstance revived his hopes. On the death of the duke of Bretagne, his brother, the earl of Montfort, took possession of that duchy, and dreading the interest of his competitor, Charles de Blois, nephew of Philip de Valois, he came over to England, and did homage to Edward as the legitimate sovereign of France. Being deprived of his duchy, and led prisoner to Paris, his consort engaged to deliver up to Edward certain fortified places, in order to procure his support. The king of England regarding this as a favourable opportunity for obtaining a position from which he might direct his future operations against any part of France, sent Robert d'Artois with an army into Bretagne. Robert fell in battle soon

after his arrival; and the earl of Nottingham, who succeeded to the command, finding his army too weak to keep the field, Edward resolved to take the conduct of the war in person, and carried over strong reinforcements. But as neither he nor the duke of Normandy, who commanded the French, thought it proper to hazard an engagement, the campaign passed over without any event of importance, and a truce was
Jan. 19th,
A.D. 1349. concluded for three years by the papal mediation.

While the king of England was engaged in his wars with France, the Scots had improved the opportunity which that circumstance afforded, to attempt the recovery of their national independence; and the adherents of David had been so successful as to compel Baliol to retire to the English borders. Edward, who had considered the Scots as unable to give him any further trouble, was now convinced of his mistake, and resolved once more to attack their country by land and by sea. But his fleet, which had on board the ammunition and provision for the army, being destroyed by a storm, he consented to a truce. The principal article was that the Scots should acknowledge Edward as their sovereign, unless David should,

before the month of May next ensuing, come with an army sufficient to support his right to the throne. This condition laid the king of France under the necessity of affording the Scots a more powerful assistance than he had hitherto done, lest he should be deprived of the advantages which he derived from their alliance and enmity to England. He therefore furnished David with men and money, and sent him to Scotland, where he assembled a numerous army of French, Scots, Danes, and Norwegians. With these troops he entered England, and captured the city of Durham, where he put all the inhabitants to the sword. But on hearing of Edward's approach he retired into his own country, and the king of England granted him a truce for two years, in order to leave himself at liberty to attend to more important concerns.

A. D. 1343. Edward now employed some time in regulating the internal affairs of his kingdom; but while his domestic concerns seemed to engross his attention, he did not neglect foreign politics, but constantly revolved in his mind his grand design of acquiring the crown of France, and made vast preparations for its execution. As he had not derived from his alliances, with the princes of Germany and the Netherlands, all the advantages that he expected, he now took

a quite different course. He dispatched to various parts of the continent, agents who were empowered to treat with all persons, of whatever description, that were willing to supply him either with men or money. He was sensible that troops thus collected would produce the same effect, with much less expence, and be more at his own disposal than those of the princes, while the efforts of Philip to corrupt his allies would be disconcerted by this measure. In order to draw to his court a number of foreign lords, with whom he might negotiate, Edward adopted an expedient perfectly agreeable to the chivalrous taste of the age. He ordered tournaments to be held, after being previously published throughout Europe, and gave the most honourable reception to all persons of distinction, who chose to be present, caressing them in such a manner that they could not sufficiently admire his politeness and magnificence. It was on this occasion that Edward instituted at Windsor the order of the knights of the round table, in memory of king Arthur.* During the time of these feasts

A. D. 1443.

* The order was so called from the knights being feasted at a round table to prevent any trouble in regard to ceremony. *Rapin* l. p. 422.

and diversions, the king treated with the foreign lords concerning the number of men they were able or willing to furnish. The vast concourse of Spaniards, Italians, Germans, Flemings, and even of Frenchmen, to England, excited the jealousy of Philip, who suspecting that Edward had some important design in these tournaments, endeavoured to counteract his policy by establishing similar entertainments in his capital. Thus the noble and the brave, from all parts of Europe, crowded to London and Paris, in order to be drawn into the quarrel between the kings of England and France.

Philip accelerated the renewal of hostilities by an act of violence of which historians have given only confused and contradictory accounts. The known fact is, that Philip suspecting certain lords of Bretagne of practices hostile to his interests, caused them to be seized and conducted to Paris, where they were beheaded without any formalities of justice. This was considered as a direct violation of the truce; and Edward immediately declared war against Philip. Having constituted the earl of Northampton his lieutenant-general in France, he sent the earl of Derby to commence hostilities in Guienne, until he could take the conduct of the war in

person, as he intended to make his principal effort in that quarter.

This design, indeed, was inspired by a circumstance wholly unexpected. Philip had succeeded in detaching the Flemings, and his intrigues effected a revolution in Flanders, which produced a considerable alteration in the plan of the war. James D'Arteville, the demagogue of Ghent, having formed the project of securing his fortune and raising his family, by transferring the sovereignty of Flanders, with the title of Duke, to Edward prince of Wales, was massacred by the people, to whom the proposal was not agreeable.* His death, which entirely changed the face of affairs in the Netherlands, deprived the king of England of the opportunity of attacking France from that quarter, and obliged him to make choice of Guienne as the point from which his operations might be the most effectually directed. The duke of Normandy† had already entered that province with an army of almost a hundred thousand men, and obliged the earl of Derby to retire to Bourdeaux.‡ Edward, therefore,

* Froissart, lib. 1. c. 119.

† The eldest son of Philip de Valois.

‡ Froissart, lib. 1. c. 129.

hastened his preparations to go in person and stop the progress of the enemy. His army consisted of four thousand men at arms, ten thousand archers, twelve thousand Welch footmen, and six thousand Irish, besides great numbers of the chief nobility.* But being prevented by contrary winds from reaching Guienne, he landed his army at La Hogue, in Normandy, and advancing into the country put all to fire and sword. Rapin seems to consider these cruelties as a revenge for the death of the lords of Bretagne, whom Philip had illegally beheaded at Paris. But the inhabitants of the country thus ravaged, were undoubtedly guiltless of that crime. Nothing is more common in history than instances of this kind of revenge, as if the people were only the property of princes.

Philip intended to inclose Edward between the Somme and the Oyse; and had his project succeeded, the whole English army must have been taken or destroyed. Edward having discovered his design, immediately decamped from Poissi, and began his retreat. Philip, at the same time, was advancing with an army of a hundred thousand men, having previously detached a body of twelve thou-

* *Id.* lib. 1. c. 124.

sand to guard the ford of Blanchetaque, where he expected that the English would attempt the passage of the Somme.* Edward passed that river in the face of the enemy, and in the evening encamped at Cressy, while Philip crossed the Somme at Abbeville.

The English monarch being closely pursued, and seeing the impossibility of avoiding a battle, took an advantageous position near Cressy, and resolved to wait the approach of the enemy. Philip, not doubting of the victory, redoubled his efforts to come up with the English. Without loss of time he marched the next morning from Abbeville, resolving to attack them before they should recommence their retreat. The English army was formed in three divisions, of which the prince of Wales, who was only fourteen years of age, commanded the first; the earls of Northampton and Arundel the second; and the king himself was at the head of the third,

Aug. 26th,
A. D. 1346. which formed the reserve. About three in the afternoon Philip appeared in sight, and at four he made his attack on the English army. The generally received account of the beginning of this battle, seems to be attended by some impro-

* Froiss. lib. 1. c. 124, &c. to 130

bable circumstances. The Genoese archers advancing to begin the attack, it is said that a sudden shower of rain slackening the strings of their cross-bows, rendered them useless; that seeing themselves exposed to a shower of arrows from the English, they began to retire; and that the count d'Alençon, the king's brother, suspecting them of treachery, ordered his horse to make a charge on them, by which rash action he threw the army into confusion. If this were the case, it indicates a strange kind of mismanagement. But the historians, who relate this, do not assign any reason why the rain had not the same effect on the bowstrings of the English, although the commentator on Rapin conjectures that they might have them secured in cases. Froissart intimates that the French began the attack in a very confused and disorderly manner, and without the king's orders, besides the disadvantage of having the sun in their faces.* The president Henault seems to ascribe the loss of this battle to Philip, who, as he says, was defeated by making an imprudent attack.† It is certain that the count d'Alençon, making a desperate attack on the division of the prince of Wales, was

* Vide Froiss. lib. 1. c. 137.

† Hen. Ab. Chron. ad An.

killed at the head of his troops, who were instantly thrown into disorder. Philip then directing a formidable column against that quarter, the young prince was likely to be overpowered by numbers. The English nobles, who admired his courage, but were full of apprehensions for his safety, sent to the king for assistance. But Edward having asked if his son were yet alive? and receiving for answer that he was alive, and performing astonishing acts of valour, said, "Tell the
"generals that so long as my son is alive,
"they must send no more to me, for I am
"determined that the honour of this day shall
"be his, and that he must now merit his
"spurs."* This answer so greatly animated the prince, that breaking through the enemies, by whom he was nearly surrounded, he obliged them to give way, and at length to retire in confusion. All the divisions of the French army were now defeated, except the reserve, commanded by Philip in person. This body maintained a long and obstinate contest. Philip made every possible exertion to change the fortune of the day, and performed prodigies of valour. The king of Bohemia, who was blind, causing the bridle of his horse to be tied to those of two knights,

* Alluding to his knighthood.

fell bravely fighting at the head of his troops; and his standard, on which were embroidered in gold, three ostrich feathers, with the words "*Ich Dien*," "I serve," was brought to the prince of Wales, who, in memory of that day, bore the same device and motto. Edward, with the reserve, watched the proper moment for making a decisive charge, which completed the victory. The French monarch made many desperate but fruitless efforts, and at length rallying some of his nobles and men at arms, rushed into the midst of the battle, in order to animate his troops. In this severe conflict he was twice dismounted, and after being severely wounded in the neck and the thigh, was obliged to be carried off the field. A most dreadful slaughter ensued, which was continued on the following day, when the French troops, flying in every direction, were unable to resist the pursuers; and seven thousand militia, who being ignorant of Philip's defeat, were marching to his camp, fell by the swords of the English. In the battle and pursuit there fell of the French eleven princes, eighty bannerets, twelve hundred knights, and about thirty thousand soldiers.* Among the slain were the king of Bohemia, the duke d'Alençon, the duke of

* Froiss. lib. 1. c. 131, &c.

Lorrain, the earl of Flanders, and fifteen other noblemen of distinction. The French also lost eighty standards.*

Such are the accounts which historians have left of the memorable battle of Cressy. Never before had England gained so glorious a victory, nor France sustained so dreadful a defeat. The success of this day has always and justly been attributed, in a considerable degree, to the valour of prince Edward; but a great part at least of the honour is due to the judicious choice which the English monarch had made of a position, where he could not be surrounded nor attacked by the whole army of Philip, but only by single divisions, a circumstance which rendered, in a great measure, useless the superiority of his force.†

The next undertaking of Edward was the siege of Calais. At the first view of its fortifications he perceived the difficulty of taking it by force, and therefore resolved to reduce it by famine. For this purpose he drew round the town four lines of circumvallation, regularly fortified, and seven hundred ships formed the blockade by sea. The governor

* Rapin l. p. 425. Henault Ab. Chron. ad Annum.

† The English are said to have first used cannon in this battle. It is somewhat surprising that no historian has recorded the loss of the English.

sent away all useless mouths in order to spare his provisions. These half starved wretches excited the pity of Edward: he received them into his camp, gave them a good dinner and each two shillings in money, and then dismissed them to go where they pleased.*

Philip resolving to disconcert the measures of Edward, excited David, king of Scotland, to invade his dominions. The Scottish monarch, considering the opportunity as extremely favourable, readily adopted the measure, and, with an army of fifty thousand men, entered England, and advanced as far as Durham. This unexpected invasion, at such a juncture, when the king and his formidable armies were fully employed in France, was extremely alarming. But the courage and activity of queen Philippa animated the spirits of the English, and repelled the danger that menaced the kingdom. That princess putting herself at the head of an army, drawn together from all parts of the country with incredible expedition, marched against the enemy. A decisive action took place near Neville's Cross, in the vicinity of Durham. The Scots were totally defeated with the loss of fifteen or twenty thousand men, and their

* Froiss. lib. I. c. 135.

king, after displaying all the valour of a hero, intermixed with the ferocity of a barbarian, was made prisoner. Though ^{October 17th,} A. D. 1347. grievously wounded in the leg, and having two spears hanging in his body, preferring death to captivity, he endeavoured to provoke the English to kill him, and even dashed out, with his gauntlet, the teeth of Sir John Copland, who required him to surrender. All his efforts, however, were fruitless; and he had the mortification of seeing himself carried off the field by the English.*

In the mean while, the blockade of Calais was rigorously continued by land and by sea. The town being reduced to the last extremity, Philip resolved to make an effort for its relief. Since his defeat at Cressy, he had, with incredible activity, assembled another army of a hundred and fifty thousand men, with which he approached Calais, and offered battle to the English. But Edward keeping close within his intrenchments, which he knew it was impossible to force, and Philip seeing himself unable to draw him out in the field, made overtures of peace, which being rejected, he proposed, by a herald, to decide

* For an account of this action vide Knight, Coll. 2590; and Froiss. lib. 1. c. 140, &c. and Buchan. lib. 9.

their quarrel by a combat of six champions on each side. But the English monarch being unwilling to refer to hazard what he hoped to accomplish by patient perseverance, Philip, who himself had before refused a similar offer, saw his proposal rejected. Edward received a reinforcement of seventeen thousand men, brought by the queen from England; and the inhabitants of Calais despairing of relief, demanded a capitulation. Edward exasperated at the obstinacy of their resistance, which had so long occupied his arms, would only grant them personal safety on the hard condition of delivering up six of the principal burghers as victims to his vengeance. This severe proposal filled Calais with consternation. The inhabitants could not think of preserving their lives by delivering up any of their companions in arms, who had shared the hardships of the siege, and contributed to the common defence. History will for ever commemorate the generous heroism of Eustace St. Pierre, one of the principal inhabitants, who seeing despair painted on every countenance, nobly offered to be one of the six. A magnanimity so uncommon made such an impression, that five more immediately followed the heroic example. These self-devoted victims went out of the

town, barefooted, in their shirts, with halters about their necks, and presented the keys to the conqueror, who immediately ordered them to be led to execution. The prince of Wales and the English nobles pleaded for their pardon; and when Edward appeared inexorable, queen Philippa casting herself at his feet, implored him, for Christ's sake, to desist from an action that would be an eternal blemish on his memory. Edward yielded to her entreaties; and the good queen, not content with saving the lives of the heroes of Calais, ordered cloaths to be brought them, and after giving them an entertainment in her own pavillion, dismissed them, with a present to each of six pièces of gold.* They were afterwards honourably received by Philip, who amply rewarded their merit.†

Aug. 3d,
A. D. 1347. Thus, after a siege, or rather a blockade of eleven months and some days, Edward became master of Calais. Famine alone had compelled the town to surrender: and the fortifications were as entire as on the first day of the siege.‡ Edward was so convinced of the importance of this conquest, that he removed all the inhabitants, and

* Rapin l. p. 426.

† Hen. Ab.-Chron. ad. Annam.

‡ Hen. ibid.

peopled the town with a colony of English. After this conquest, Edward consented to a truce proposed by Philip, and immediately returned to his own kingdom.

England had never before attained to such a pitch of greatness and glory. The prudence, valour, and good fortune of the king, gave an extraordinary splendour to his crown; and the brilliant qualities of the heir apparent afforded the most promising hopes of its continuance. To give an additional lustre

A. D. 1348. to Edward's glory, ambassadors arrived the following year from Germany, with an offer of the imperial crown. Several of the princes being dissatisfied at the election of Charles IV. were desirous of making a new choice, and cast their eyes on the king of England, whose fame was now spread over the continent. But Edward was sensible of the expences and embarrassments in which he should be involved by accepting the imperial dignity, and regarding the crown of France as a more substantial acquisition, he resolved to direct his views solely to that object, and therefore declined the honour intended him by the princes of Germany.

While England was thus triumphant in arms, magnificence and luxury prevailed to

an extraordinary degree among the higher ranks of society. The nobles and gentry were employed in tilts and tournaments, the warlike amusements of this romantic age. An enthusiastic spirit of chivalry pervaded even the female sex; and nothing was more common than to see ladies dressed like cavaliers, with swords by their sides, and their horses adorned with rich trappings, riding in troops to be spectators of the tournaments. Every public exhibition was a scene of martial parade and triumphant grandeur.* But this state of public prosperity was dreadfully interrupted by a national calamity, which was not peculiar to England. A dreadful plague which, according to the most authentic accounts, first made its appearance in the year 1346 in China or the eastern parts of Tartary, after making terrible ravages in Asia, spread its direful contagion into Africa and Europe. After almost depopulating Greece and Italy, it passed into Spain and France, and from thence in England, where it made such terrible ravages, that, according to some, it swept away half of the inhabitants. In

* In the year 1346, St. Stephen's chapel, then part of the Royal Palace, but now the House of Commons, was finished.

London the mortality was so dreadful, that, within the space of one year, above 50,000 persons were buried in the Charter-house yard.* This terrible pestilence raged in England from the beginning of August 1348, till Michaelmas the following year; and during the time that it raged in Asia, Africa, and Europe, more than half of the human race is supposed to have perished.†

This tremendous visitation of heaven did not put a stop to the ambition of man. The pestilence made the same ravages in France as in England, yet amidst those scenes of death and destruction, and during the continuance of the truce, Philip had formed a plan for recovering Calais by bribing the governor. But Edward receiving intelligence of the design, sent for the governor to London, and promised him pardon on condition of revealing the particulars of the plot. The traitor finding himself in a perilous situation, instantly accepted the offer, informed him of all the circumstances, and on the evening appointed for its execution, the king, with the prince of Wales, three hundred men at arms, and six hundred archers, arrived at

* Stowe's Ann. p. 245 and 246.

† Walsingham says that in many parts of England nine-tenths of the people fell victims to this dreadful disease. Walsing. p. 168.

Calais. The governor, according to his agreement with the French, and the plan concerted with Edward, admitted twelve French knights, and a hundred men at arms, into the town by a postern. Edward being ready to receive them, instantly made them prisoners. The next morning he and the prince of Wales sallied out of the gates, and attacked a body of French that lay in ambush near the town. In this action the English monarch engaged in single combat with Eustace de Ribauumont, a knight of Picardy, by whose heavy blows he was twice brought down on his knees. The speedy relief which he received from his own men, delivered him from his danger, and even enabled him to defeat the French and take Ribauumont prisoner. Edward, in the true spirit of chivalry, treated him in the most honourable manner, gave him his liberty without any ransom, and presented him with a rich string of pearls, which he used to wear in his own cap as a testimony of his esteem.

The attempt upon Calais having failed, Philip denied having any concern in the business; and Edward not being prepared for the renewal of the war, appeared to be satisfied with this assertion. The truce, therefore, still continued; and Edward, after appoint-

ing a new governor at Calais, returned to England. During the interval of leisure which he now enjoyed, he engaged in an enterprise which, if not equally glorious, was of greater utility than all his continental expeditions. A great number of Spanish corsairs infested the English coasts, and greatly injured the commerce of the kingdom. On receiving the complaints of the merchants, the king put to sea with his fleet, and engaging the pirates, took twenty-six of their ships,* sunk many more, and dispersed the rest. Edward, who knew the advantages arising from trade, esteemed this victory of so great an importance, that he caused a gold coin to be struck, on which he was represented in a ship with a cutlass in his hand, in order to perpetuate its memory. Philip de Valois, king of France, departed this life the following year. Though only fifty-seven years of age, he died old and worn out in the pursuits of love and ambition.† John, his son and successor, renewed the truce till Whitsuntide 1354; but it was ill observed on both sides; and in Bretagne, Gascony, and Picardy, frequent hostilities were committed. These

* Walsing. p. 169.

† Hen. Abteg. Chron. An. 1350.

gave occasion to mutual complaints and reprisals; and during this state of illegal and irregular warfare, the town of Guisnes was sold to Edward by the governor. On the expiration of the truce, the two kings of England and France were prepared for renewing the war. Edward invested the prince of Wales, his son, with the duchy of Guienne, and commanded him to recommence hostilities. The young prince, accompanied Sept. 8th,
A. D. 1354. by the earls of Warwick, Suffolk, Salisbury, and Oxford, with only one thousand men at arms, and the same number of archers, began his warlike operations.

Edward being about to renew the war with France, was desirous of peace with Scotland, and a treaty was concluded, by which he engaged to liberate their king on receiving ninety thousand marks for his ransom. But before the condition was executed, the Scots took Berwick by surprise, and thus entirely annulled the treaty. The king having obtained from the parliament a liberal subsidy, quickly raised an army, and marched into the north. On his approach, the Scots abandoned Berwick after demolishing the fortifications, which he revenged by ravaging their country and destroying the city of Edin-

burgh.* This unexpected rupture, at the moment when a treaty of peace had been concluded, caused Edward to take a new resolution with regard to Scotland. He had always acted more for himself than for Baliol; and he now resolved to throw off the mask under which he had hitherto concealed his intentions. As Baliol had enjoyed only an ideal crown, he willingly ceded his claims to Edward, in consideration of an annual pension of two thousand pounds; and thus received a substantial sum of money in lieu of an imaginary kingdom, which the English monarch expected to convert into a real possession.

During these transactions the prince of Wales had recommenced the war in France, and ravaged the southern provinces. Having made a sudden incursion into Languedoc, he plundered Carcassone and Narbonne, and returned with a great booty to Bourdeaux. The success of this expedition encouraged him to undertake a second. He marched again from Bourdeaux with an army of twelve thousand men, of which not more than three thousand were English. Having traversed Le Perigord

July 5th,
A.D. 1336.

* Vide Heet. Boet. lib. 15.

and Le Limousin, he entered Berre, and appeared before the gates of Bourge; but the approach of the French king, at the head of above sixty thousand men, obliged him to begin a circuitous retreat towards Bourdeaux. John pursued him with extraordinary celerity, and, by forced marches, came up with him near Poitiers. The prince finding it impossible to continue his retreat, intrenched his army at Maupertius, about six miles from Poitiers, in a strong position, incumbered with vineyards and thick hedges, which rendered it of difficult access. Two legates were sent by the Pope to mediate a peace; and prince Edward, aware of his difficult situation, offered to restore all that he had taken in his incursions, and not to bear arms for seven years against France. But John, relying on the superiority of his force, rejected these proposals, and insisted that the prince, with his whole army, should surrender at discretion. To this Edward magnanimously replied, that he would die with his sword in his hand rather than tarnish the glory of the English name.

The French monarch might, with ease, have surrounded this small army, and forced it by famine to surrender; and all his experienced generals advised him to adopt that measure,

of which the success appeared certain. But his imagination being dazzled with the prospect of a splendid victory, he rejected their counsel, and resolved to attack, without delay, the English position. As it appears, from the nature of the ground, the cavalry could not act, he ordered them to dismount and begin the battle on foot, which Rapiu remarks as a very great error, because they were not accustomed to charge on foot, and were consequently repulsed with great loss. But the infantry advancing in their turn to the attack, did not meet with a less determined resistance. Whatever were the errors which John committed in beginning the battle, he displayed the most dauntless courage during the whole time of the conflict, which he maintained during the space of four hours, animating his troops by his voice and example, and exposing his person in places of the greatest danger. The prince of Wales, at the same time, performed acts of valour worthy of the greatest heroes of antiquity; and his soldiers, as well as himself, fought like men determined to conquer or perish. The French were at length thrown into confusion; but their king, whose conspicuous valour had drawn upon him the bravest of the English warriors, though standing single

and surrounded by his enemies, defended himself with a courage inspired by despair, till at length overpowered by the numbers of assailants, he surrendered himself prisoner to Denis Morbeck, a knight of Artois. Together with the king was taken his young son Philip, who, though only thirteen years of age, had bravely fought by his side.* Of the French there fell in the field of battle about six thousand, and about fifteen thousand were taken prisoners, among whom, besides the king and his son, were the duke of Bourbon and the constable of France, with fifty of the principal nobles, and eight hundred gentlemen of distinction.

The prince of Wales received his royal prisoner with the greatest modesty and politeness. The next day solemn thanks were returned to God in the English camp; and the prince addressed his victorious troops in terms that, without any mention of himself, ascribed to them all the honour of the day. He then marched for Bourdeaux with his prisoners, and an immense booty. It is easy to conceive the joy which the news of so brilliant a victory excited in England. The

* Hesp. Chronist. Charles V. says, that his governor had made the three elder princes retire at the beginning of the engagement. Ab. Chron. An. 1380.

king considered it as a proof that heaven had, in a peculiar manner, protected his son, and ordered thanks to be returned to God for eight successive days in all the churches of the kingdom. The prince of Wales wintered at Bourdeaux, and, through the mediation of the Pope, a truce for two years was agreed on between the two crowns, including all their allies. In the following spring he

A. D. 1357. brought his royal prisoner to England. The prince was received

with excessive demonstrations of joy; and every honour was also paid to the captive monarch. On making their entry into London, the prince of Wales rode on a little black horse by the side of the king of France, who was mounted on a stately white courser, with costly trappings. He was received by the mayor and aldermen in all their formalities; and in the streets through which he passed to Westminster, the citizens displayed their plate, tapestry, and armour. London had never before exhibited such a spectacle. Edward impressed with a view of the instability of fortune, received the king of France rather as a monarch that was come to pay him a visit than as a prisoner, and assigned the palace of the Savoy for the residence of him and prince Philip, his son.

England had now arrived at the acme of her military splendour; and her monarch had the great and uncommon glory of having the kings of France and Scotland his prisoners. Edward now appeared to be weary of his harassing wars with Scotland; and although Baliol had resigned to him all his pretensions, yet, at the moment when it was least expected, the king of England consented to liberate David for a hundred thousand marks, to be paid by instalments, and the payment secured by the delivery of hostages.* The Scottish monarch recovered his liberty on this condition; and after eleven years of captivity, returned to his kingdom.

The truces with France and Scotland having put a stop to foreign hostilities, left Edward at liberty to direct his attention to internal regulations. A considerable portion of this period of leisure was spent in feasts and entertainments, of which the king of France, and the other prisoners of distinction, were always partakers. A tournament, which was held at Windsor to solemnize the feast of St. George, the patron of the Order of the Garter, was the

April 23d,
A. D. 1356.

* Rapin says that Edward yielded to the earnest entreaties of his sister, the consort of David, king of Scotland. Hist. Eng. l. p. 490.

most sumptuous and magnificent that had ever been seen in England. The duke of Brabant, with several other princes, and an incredible number of nobles and knights of all nations, were present, and splendidly entertained.

While England flourished in peace and prosperity, France was rent with intestine commotions. The Parisians, headed by Etienne Marcel, provost of the merchants, rebelled against the Dauphin, who governed the kingdom with the title of regent.* The Dauphin was obliged to retire from Paris; and Charles the Bad, king of Navarre, having a powerful party in that city, committed all kinds of enormities. The peasants, at the same time, rose in arms against the *noblesse*, by whom they had been grievously oppressed, and threatened the total extirpation of the whole order.† All France was in a state of anarchy; and the government appeared entirely dissolved. Charles, the Dauphin, although a prince of transcendent abilities, found it next to impossible to steer the vessel of the state amidst these tremendous tempests; and the disorders which menaced

* Hen. Ab. Chron. ad Annum 1358.

† Hen. Ab. Chron. ad Annum 1358.

France with ruin, caused John to be extremely desirous of returning to his kingdom. He therefore concluded a treaty with Edward, who consented to restore him to liberty ; but the terms were so disadvantageous to France, that the states-general refused their ratification.

A. D. 1359.

This refusal was a signal for the renewal of the war ; and Edward made immense preparations for his new expedition. An army of a hundred thousand men assembled at Calais, indicated his design of achieving the conquest of France, while the divided state of that kingdom seemed to afford him so fair an opportunity. Having divided his forces into three bodies ; the first commanded by the duke of Lancaster ; the second by the prince of Wales ; and the third by himself in person ; Edward advanced into France without opposition. The Dauphin finding himself unable to keep the field against so formidable a force, commanded by the best generals in Europe, adopted a system entirely defensive, contenting himself with providing the principal towns with military stores, and carefully avoiding any action.

Edward thus meeting with no resistance, traversed Artois, and having entered Champagne, made an unsuccessful attempt to

surprise the city of Rheims. The duke of Burgundy, in order to preserve his country from pillage and devastation, obtained a truce for three years, on condition of paying the sum of about thirty-five thousand pounds.* The king of England being extremely desirous of bringing the contest to a decision by a battle, the issue of which he knew could scarcely fail of being in his favour, encamped near Chartres, and afterwards advanced to the gates of Paris. But the Dauphin prudently resolving not to hazard an action, kept himself shut up in his capital ; and although the English desolated the environs, and the smoke of the villages set on fire was seen from the walls, nothing could induce him to alter his resolution. He endeavoured, by negotiation, to save France from the impending destruction ; but Edward rejected all his proposals.

The English monarch, however, made no attempt on Paris. Perceiving the siege of that capital to be too difficult an undertaking, he retired towards La Beauce, accompanied by the Pope's legate, who continually pressed him to set bounds to his ambition. Edward continued, for some time, deaf to his remonstrances ; but when it was least ex-

* Vide Rym. Fœd. tom. 6. p. 161.—Tyrrel, p. 629.

pected, he yielded to send plenipotentiaries to Brittany to open a negotiation for peace. This sudden change of mind is, both by the French and the English historians, ascribed to a cause to which nothing but the superstition of the age can give an appearance of probability. While he lay in his camp, in the neighbourhood of Chartres, there arose a sudden and dreadful storm, accompanied with hail of a prodigious size, which falling upon his army, killed six thousand horses and one thousand men. Lord Morley was in the number of those that were slain; and the Lord Guy de Beauchamp, eldest son of the earl of Warwick, being mortally wounded by a hailstone, expired within a few days. So tremendous a convulsion of nature was deemed by the army a sign of the wrath of heaven, and the king himself appeared to be impressed with the same opinion. In the midst of the storm, he turned his face towards the church of Chartres, which he saw at a distance, and falling on his knees, made a vow to consent to an equitable peace. The unusual operations of nature have, in all ages, been regarded by the vulgar as miracles; and there is no reason to wonder that ignorant soldiers should fall into so common an error. According to modern ideas, and the

maxims of politics, it is somewhat extraordinary that a thunder-storm should so terrify an ambitious monarch as to induce him to abandon a favourite project. But superstition was one of the characteristics of the age; and Edward, though a great prince, was not a philosopher; or even had he been such, he might have found it impossible to remove the fatal impression from the minds of his troops; and he could not entertain any flattering hopes of conquering a powerful kingdom with soldiers who believed that the enterprise had excited the indignation of heaven. The king of England might have good political reasons for concluding a peace. Although he had led an army of a hundred thousand men into the centre of France, he had only ravaged the open and defenceless country, without being able to make any important conquest. Nor could he flatter himself with the hopes of more decisive advantages. His numerous army was daily diminished by sickness, a circumstance which, in conjunction with the little progress made during the campaign, might induce him to apprehend that a retreat would shortly be necessary, and in such a situation he might be glad that an extraordinary event afforded him so fair an opportunity of pretending to

consent, through motives of generosity and piety, to a peace, the expediency of which might have been suggested by considerations of a different nature.

But whatever might be the case in this respect, a treaty was concluded at May 8th, A. D. 1360. Bretigny. The principal articles were, that the king of England should possess, in full sovereignty, Calais, Guienne, Xaintonge, Angoulesme, Le Limosin, Perigord, Poitou, &c.* and that he should, for himself and his successors, renounce all pretensions to the crown of France, as well as to the duchy of Normandy, the earldom of Anjou, and all the other provinces, &c. in France, claimed or possessed by his predecessors. The ransom of the king of France was fixed at three millions of crowns, to be paid at appointed periods; and the great prisoners taken at the battle of Poitiers, with several other French lords, and a number of burghers from the principal cities, were to remain as hostages with the king of England till the complete execution of the treaty.

Peace being thus concluded, the king of France was restored to liberty; and Edward

* The boundaries mentioned in the treaty, as well as the names of several castles, &c. are here omitted as uninteresting to the modern reader.

gave him a sensible proof of his generosity in permitting him to carry with him his favourite son Philip, although that young prince was one of the hostages. As soon as John arrived in his kingdom, he ratified the treaty of Bretigny. The following year the king

A. D. 1362.

of England erected Guienne into a principality under the name of Aquitaine, and invested the prince of Wales with the sovereignty, obliging him only to pay annually one ounce of gold to the crown of England. Edward also employed this season of tranquillity in regulating the internal affairs of his kingdom. He ordained, in particular, that the pleadings in the courts of justice, and all public acts which had hitherto been in French, should be for the future in English. Thus was the nation freed from a mark of subjection introduced by the Norman conquest. In the beginning

A. D. 1363.

of the following year, the prince of Wales departed for his government of Aquitaine; and the same year, John, king of France, returned to London, but not to surrender himself again as a prisoner, as some have pretended. It is generally supposed that he came to treat for the ransom of his son, the duke of Anjou, who had made his escape while an hostage; but all that

historians have said concerning the motives of his journey amounts to nothing more than conjecture.* It is certain that he was received with all the respect due to his rank and his merit. The king sent the princes, his sons, to conduct him from Dover to London ; and the presence of the kings of Scotland and Cyprus, who were then at the court of England, rendered his reception more splendid, as Edward, on so uncommon an occasion, took every care to entertain his illustrious guests with extraordinary magnificence. After the king of France had resided at London more than three months, he was seized with a distemper, of which he died to the great grief of Edward, by whom he was highly esteemed, being one of the bravest and most honourable princes of his age. The year 1366 was remarkable for the demand made by Pope Urban IV. of the tribute which king John had engaged to pay to the see of Rome, and of which thirty years payment was in arrear. The king laid the Pope's demand before his parliament ; and that august assembly declaring that the king of England had no power to bring his realm into subjec-

* Vide Rapin l. p. 437. Hen. Ab. Chron. ad Annum 1364. Froiss. lib. l. c. 220.

tion without the consent of parliament, displayed such firmness that the tribute was never after demanded.

The prince of Wales kept his court at Bourdeaux, where he displayed the magnificence of a monarch, and enjoyed, during the space of three years, an easy tranquillity. At length being weary of inaction, or dazzled with the glory of restoring a deposed sovereign, he espoused the cause of Pedro the Cruel, king of Castile, whom his subjects had expelled for his tyranny. The fugitive monarch appeared as a suppliant at the court of Bourdeaux; and the prince being moved by his entreaties, or allured by his promises, marched with an army of thirty thousand men towards Spain.* At the battle of

April 3d,
A. D. 1387.

Nojara, on the frontier of Castile, prince Edward displayed the same martial talents as at Cressy and Poitiers. The Spanish army, aided by a strong body of French, was totally defeated. The famous Bertrand du Guesclin, who commanded the French troops, was made prisoner; and in consequence of this signal victory, Pedro re-ascended the throne of Castile. This expe-

* For the treaty between Pedro and the prince of Aquitaine, vide Rymer's Fœd. tom. 6. p. 512, &c. Barnes, p. 684, &c.

dition, if success alone be considered, was glorious ; but if the character of the man, for whose interests it was undertaken, be examined, it loses all its lustre ; and its consequences were fatal to the English prince and his army. Pedro is depicted by historians as the most detestable of tyrants ; and his perfidy was equal to the rest of his vices. He no sooner saw himself replaced on the throne, than he forgot all his promises, and repaid his protector with ingratitude.* He would neither pay the stipulated subsidy, nor supply the English with provisions. The want of these produced a dreadful mortality among the troops ; and the prince seeing their numbers daily diminished, was obliged to retire in order to save his army from total destruction. He was even obliged to sell his plate to provide for the pressing necessities of his soldiers ; but what was infinitely worse, he contracted a disorder, from which he never recovered.

History affords numerous instances of princes who, after a series of the most signal successes, have outlived their prosperity, and experienced the reverses of fortune. Edward

* Pedro soon after received the reward of his ingratitude. The Castilians again revolted ; and Pedro was slain by his brother Henry, who ascended the throne without opposition.

III. was one of this number. He had hitherto appeared on the theatre of the world as one of the most glorious monarchs that had ever swayed a sceptre. But the end of his reign affords a melancholy contrast to its commencement. After all his great efforts and glorious achievements, he lived to see the loss of those splendid conquests which he had made amidst so many dangers and toils, and with so great an effusion of human blood.

No sooner was John, king of France, laid in his grave, than Charles V. his son and successor, began to meditate the renewal of the war. He used a variety of subterfuges for evading the unexecuted part of the treaty of Bretigny, and neglected to pay the ransom of the king, his father. In the mean while some of the hostages had made their escape, and some were dead : some had been liberated by Edward's generosity, and others had purchased their freedom with money, so that only a few remained in England, although about two millions of the ransom money still was unpaid. But as Charles thought it expedient to dissemble till he had acquired sufficient strength for renewing the war, he professed a great willingness to execute all the articles of the treaty, and accumulated money under the pretence of paying his father's ran-

som ; but, in reality, for a very different purpose. During the space of five years, Charles continued his professions of peace, and his preparations for war. At length he threw off the mask, and found a pretence to quarrel with England. The prince of Wales having laid, on the inhabitants of Guienne, a tax called *fouage* or chimney-money, in order to pay the arrears of the troops which had been levied for the Spanish expedition,* some discontented lords encouraged the complaints of their vassals, which being ill received by the prince, they applied to the French king, who, notwithstanding the renunciation of the treaty of Bretigny, still pretended to the paramount sovereignty of Guienne, and cited the prince of Wales to appear before him to answer for his conduct.† He also pretended that the treaty of Bretigny was void, because the prince had not prevented some of his disbanded troops from entering France and pillaging several parts of the country.‡ But statesmen, when peace is incompatible with their interests, can always find pretexts for war.

The ill state of health of the prince of Wales accelerated the measures of the French

* Froiss. lib. i. c. 239. † Id. lib. i. c. 241. ‡ Froiss. lib. i. c. 242.

king, who considered the opportunity as favourable for the commencement of hostilities. The transactions of this war are destitute of that brilliant character which rendered the former so memorable in history; although the result was equally important. On the side of the English it was a continued series of disasters. The prince of Wales being disqualified by his disease for the
In January,
A. D. 1310. toils of government and war, returned to England, and his departure was fatal to the affairs of the English in Guienne. After the loss of this celebrated commander, they were unfortunate by land and by sea. Under the conduct of the earl of Hereford, their fleet defeated that of the Flemings, who had declared for France. But their arms were not long triumphant on the ocean. Henry, king of Castile, who had been raised to the throne of Pedro the Cruel, by the aid of the French monarch, recompensed the kindness, by sending a fleet for the naval blockade of Rochelle. A desperate action took place between the Spanish and English fleets, the former commanded by admiral Boccanegra, a Genoese, and the latter by the earl of Pembroke.* The conflict, which lasted

* Froissart, lib. 1. c. 297.

two days, terminated in the total defeat of the English ; and their admiral, the earl of Pembroke, was carried prisoner into Spain. This defeat ruined the affairs of the English. By land they were still more unprosperous. The celebrated Bertrand du Guesclin, on whom the French king had conferred the command of his army, subdued the greatest part of Guienne, and recovered the other provinces, towns, &c. ceded to England by the treaty of Bretigny. This war affords no particulars that merit attention. The successes of the French were continual, and the English towns and fortresses often surrendered at the first appearance of the enemy.* Through the mediation of the Pope, a truce put an end to this singular scene of hostility. By this treaty England lost all that she had gained by the treaty of Bretigny, and retained little in France, except Calais and Bourdeaux.

In the last years of his reign, Edward III. appears to have laid aside his martial inclinations, which had so greatly exalted his fame, and, like the celebrated king of Israel, spent the concluding part of his life in a manner

* It may appear somewhat extraordinary that the duke of Lancaster having landed at Calais a short time before the truce, traversed France and came to Bourdeaux without opposition. Tyrrel, p. 744, &c.

less conducive to his reputation. Being enamoured of Alice Pierce, who had been lady of the bedchamber to his deceased queen Philippa, he lavished on her the money raised for public purposes, to the great discontent of the nation. On attaining the fiftieth year of his reign, he caused it to be celebrated as a jubilee, and published a general pardon for all offences.

A. D. 1376.

This season of joy was soon followed by an universal sorrow, occasioned by the death of Edward, prince of Wales. Eminent for every virtue, and rivalling the greatest heroes of antiquity, he had long been the glory of the English nation, which sincerely lamented his loss.* The parliament attended his corps to Canterbury, where he was interred, according to his choice.† His father was for some time inconsolable. And the king of France, although he had little cause to be sorry for his death, gave an honourable proof of respect to his memory, by attending in person at a solemn service celebrated in the cathedral of Notre Dame, at Paris, for the repose of his soul.* Edward III. survived his renowned son very

June 8th.
A. D. 1376.

* He acquired the surname of the Black Prince from the colour of his armour. Rapin 1. p. 444.

† Henault Ab. Chron. ad Annum 1376. Rapin 1. p. 444.

little more than a year. But before he left the world, he had the mortification of seeing the world leave him. His favourite concubine, who attended him in his sickness, suffered few persons to enter the room. As soon as she saw him in the agonies of death, she seized every thing of value that she could find, and took even the rings from his fingers, after which she withdrew. The rest of the courtiers were equally inattentive to the dying monarch. Not one remained with him to console him in his last moments. In this manner, the once mighty Edward, forsaken by all, lay struggling in the agonies of death, when a priest accidentally entered the room, and approaching his bed, endeavoured to console him by pious exhortations. The king endeavoured to reply ; but his voice was too inarticulate to be understood. The only word distinctly pronounced was the name of Christ, after which he instantly expired. In this neglected state did the renowned Edward III. close the last scene of his life at Shene, now Richmond, in Surrey, in the sixty-fifth year of his age, and the fifty-first of his reign.

June 21st,
A. D. 1377.

The character of Edward III. is sufficiently developed in the history of his reign. He was not only the most powerful prince, but

the greatest general at that time in Europe. He possessed all the military skill of the age; and in personal courage and valour he equalled the greatest heroes of ancient or modern times. In person he was very tall and well made: his aspect was noble and majestic, and his looks commanded respect. His disposition was humane, magnanimous, and merciful. Generous to all, he was particularly the friend of the poor, the fatherless, and the widow. In conferring honours and rewards, he proportioned them to merit, with so much judgment, that few princes have been better served either in the cabinet or in the field. His behaviour was affable, and his conversation agreeable and easy, but always tempered with gravity and discretion. In all the occurrences of life he displayed a constant equanimity, being never dejected by adversity, nor elated by prosperity. His splendid victories and his distinguished valour, which was admired by all Europe, never inspired him with pride; and, without assuming any honour to himself, he ascribed all his successes to the protection of heaven. His internal administration was guided by the most judicious policy. A variety of other circumstances concurred, with his martial fame, to give him greater power over his subjects than

his predecessors had enjoyed. The dissensions between the clergy and the Pope had contributed to strip the veil of sanctity from the church, and to diminish the veneration in which it had been held by the people. But nothing had a greater tendency to establish and exalt the royal authority than the introduction of a pecuniary commutation for personal service in war, a principle which had long been operating, and of which the natural tendency was to transfer the power of the sword from the nobles to the king. Before the introduction of this system, any baron, although summoned to the war, might refuse to appear; and his dependants acknowledging no subjection to the king, but only to their own master, were obliged to follow his example. The king was, therefore, entirely dependant on the nobility, who were the acting as well as the deliberating power. But by the commutation of personal service into pecuniary tax, in conjunction with the increase of the people, and the more extensive use of money instead of barter, armies began to be indiscriminately raised and paid by the king, acknowledging no other authority than his, and regarding him as the sole source of preferment or disgrace. Thus, in the reign of Edward III. the clergy, the nobles, the

people, and the armies, were quite different from what they had formerly been ; and all these changes contributed to increase the power of the king, which began to extend from the highest to the lowest of his subjects.

But though Edward possessed a power so much greater than that of his predecessors, he always used it with moderation, and conducted all his measures in perfect harmony with his parliament. Far from aiming at despotism, he was a friend to the liberties of his people. He both understood and promoted the commercial interests of his kingdom. And in none of the preceding reigns had there been enacted so many statutes conducive to the benefit of the subject. The greatest blemish that history can throw on his memory, is the dishonourable manner in which he broke the peace with Scotland, in order to dispossess a minor king, who was his brother-in-law. In regard to his efforts for the conquest of France, the obscurity and uncertainty of the laws relating to the succession, may furnish an apology for his conduct. On the whole, however, it would be difficult to exculpate his character from the charge of ambition. In his youth, continence was reckoned among the number of his virtues : he lived in constant harmony with his queen

Philippa, who was always the sole mistress of his affections; and his amour with Alice Pierce, in his old age and widowhood, may be placed to the account of human frailty.

The reign of Edward III. is the most splendid and striking, and one of the most important recorded in English history. It merits consideration in a threefold point of view, as exhibiting the political, military, and social state of the kingdom in that age. The great political objects of this reign were the conquests of Scotland and France. The attempt to annex Scotland to England cannot be said to be founded in equity; but it might be excused on the plea of expediency, the leading doctrine of political creeds. The union of the two kingdoms at whatever time, or by whatever means it might have been effected, must have proved an incalculable benefit to both. But the conquest of France, whether founded in equity or injustice, would have been highly detrimental to England. The presence of the monarch would have been almost always necessary in France, a station more proper than England for the transaction of business with the different powers of Europe, and possessing a more agreeable climate. The court and the nobility would have been attracted to that

country. England would soon have been regarded as no more than an insular appendage to France. Paris would have been the metropolis of the united Anglo-Francis empire; and London, forsaken by the court and the nobles, would have dwindled into a provincial capital. Yet the parliament zealously supported the pretensions of the monarch; and the people, dazzled with the *ignis fatuus* of an ideal conquest, seconded with ardour his views, the realization of which must have been fatal to the independence of England.* A modern writer has observed that the claim of Edward III. to the French succession, "though neither founded "in justice nor expediency, was yet sufficiently plausible to palliate that love of "extensive dominion, with which not only "princes, but even the people in all ages and "countries have been almost constantly "intoxicated."† The people of France were scarcely less blameable in so obstinately rejecting than the English in so enthusiastically supporting his claims. The peers

* The parliament seems to have had some apprehensions of falling under a French government; and stipulated for the independence of the English monarchy, and the preservation of the English laws. Vide Stat. 14. Edward III. But the natural order of things would have proved too strong for these precautions.

† Millar's Hist. Eng. Gov. vol. 2. p. 161.

and great lords, who engrossed the offices of honour and emolument, might wish to oppose the introduction of an English nobility; but the French nation ought to have favoured a succession which would have spared oceans of blood, and millions of money, besides aggrandizing the monarchy by so important an accession as the kingdom of England. Historians and orators often declaim against the ambition of kings: might they not with equal, or greater propriety, reprobate the folly of nations.

The military view of this victorious reign merits a particular attention. According to the fundamental law of the feudal system, the armies originally consisted entirely of the barons, at the head of their vassals, a loose and disorderly force, almost independent of the king, and constantly tending to disorganization.* In the reign of Henry II. or, as some think, previous to that period, it became not unusual to accept of pecuniary aids, in lieu of personal service.† These fines, which obtained the name of scutage, or ser-

* A feudal army was, properly, an assemblage of several small armies under different chiefs, and over which the authority of the king was extremely limited.

† Vide Tindal's Notes on Regin 1. p. 780.

vice money,* were at the first arbitrarily imposed by the crown, or settled by private contract between individuals and the king. This commutation being a conveniency to many of the subjects, while it brought money into the coffers of the prince, became gradually more common, and was brought under the regulation of parliament.† The king found his power increased by the acceptance of scutage, as it enabled him to raise soldiers that were more at his disposal than the feudal levies.‡ This practice had begun greatly to prevail before the time of Edward III. and during his reign it became still more general. Then we find that the numerous armies, with which he carried on his wars in France, were, in a great part, composed of foreign mercenaries, collected from different parts of the continent. The splendid success which attended his arms, may, in a great measure, be ascribed to this circumstance. In France the military force consisted almost wholly of feudal levies, and on every occasion they were found inferior in discipline to Edward's mercenary troops. The greatest difficulty that he experienced was the raising of money for

* From *scutum* a shield.

† Vide *Magna Charta*, Johan. c. 14.

‡ Vide *Mill. Hist. Eng. Gov.* 2. p. 31, &c.

the payment of his army.* In that age commerce had not begun to introduce a general affluence, except in Italy, the Mahomedan part of Spain, and the Netherlands : in every other part of Europe specie was extremely scarce. The English parliament granted the monarch liberal subsidies, which were levied chiefly on wool, the staple commodity of the kingdom.† But the impossibility of raising money for the wool tax obliged the collectors to take it in kind, and send it to the merchants of Flanders to be disposed of for the use of the king.‡ So slow and circuitous a mode of raising money for the public expenditure was very different from the expeditious system of finance which prevails in modern times ; and it requires no great effort of judgment to perceive what influence it must have had on the operations of war.

Yet amidst this scarcity of money, which so greatly embarrassed kings and commanders, the vocation of the soldier was, in that age, far more lucrative than at present.

* Gold was first coined in England in the year 1345, the 18th of Edward III.—Rym. Fœd. tom. 5. p. 403.

† Of this a variety of instances may be seen in Knighton's Collect. Cott. Abridg. Rym. Fœd. &c.

‡ In the year 1340 twenty thousand sacks of wool were sent into Flanders for the king's use. Vide Rym. Fœd. tom. 5. Cott. Abridg. p. 19.

The pay of the army which Edward conducted to Antwerp in the year 1338, as stated by Dr. Brady, will enable us to make a comparison. In that army, besides the prince, whose pay is stated at £1. per day, there were fourteen earls, including the bishop of Durham, each at 6s. 8d. per day; forty-four barons and bannerets at 4s. 1046 knights at 2s. per day. The number of esquires, captains, &c. was 4022, each of whom had 1s. per day. The pay of the serjeants and archers on horseback, &c. was 6d. per day; of archers on foot 3d. per day; of the masons, carpenters, smiths, tentmakers, miners, gunners, &c. some had 1s. some 10d. others 6d. and others only 3d. per day. There was also a body of Welsh troops, of which the serjeants had only 4d. and the privates 2d. per day.* With the exception of these it appears that the pay of the meanest soldier was 3d. per day, equivalent in weight to 9d. of modern money. According to the *Chronicon Pretiosum* of bishop Fleetwood, the average price of wheat, in those times, was about 4s. or 12s. of modern money per quarter. White wine was about 6d. and red about 4d. per gallon, or 1s. 6d. and 1s. respectively in modern money. Beer, but-

* This statement is from Dr. Brady's append. vol. 3.

cher's meat, poultry, &c. were proportionally cheap. Sugar and other groceries were little used : Tea, coffee, and tobacco were wholly unknown. If we, therefore, compare the relative value of money and the prices of provisions, &c. in the fourteenth and the nineteenth centuries, we shall find the pay of a common soldier, in the reign of Edward III. equivalent to more than 6s. per day at the present time.

But pay was far from being the chief emolument of the soldier. The frequency of plunder offered him much greater advantages, and two or three successful campaigns were sufficient to make his fortune. Military men, of all ranks, returned from the wars laden with spoils, which enabled them to make a distinguished figure and live in a luxurious stile. Not only fine table linen but gold and silver plate, and jewels which had formerly been seen only among the nobility, now became common in the houses of private persons who had enriched themselves in the wars. Among these were several Englishmen who had accompanied Guy de Lusignan, king of Cyprus, and returned home laden with the spoils of the east. This was among the English an age of military adventure ; and several persons of an inferior class raised

themselves by their valour from indigence and obscurity to wealth and eminence. Sir John Hawkwood, a journeyman tailor in London, quitting his trade for the profession of arms, went as a soldier to France, where he was knighted for his valour. After the peace of Bretigny he was one of the leaders of the Companies, so famous for their ravages in France, and their refusal to acknowledge the authority of any sovereign.* Being at the head of a numerous body of these soldiers of fortune, who were averse to every profession but war, and had no dependence but on their swords, he went into Italy and engaged in the service of the Marquis of Montserrat. He was afterwards so greatly in favour with the Duke of Milan that he espoused his natural daughter. After the death of that prince Hawkwood served the republic of Florence with such distinguished success that he acquired the glory of being considered as the restorer of military discipline in Italy. The Florentines were so sensible of his merit that after his death they erected, in the cathedral, a monument to perpetuate the memory of his martial talents and eminent services. The

* These were a mixture of French, Flemings, Italians, Germans, and English, who, refusing to disband themselves, remained in arms, and ravaged many parts of France.

fortune of an individual who, from the lowest rank in life, raises himself to the highest station, and renders his name an honour to his country, is a more striking object of contemplation than the successes of an Edward or even of an Alexander.

The martial and romantic genius of the king, diffused a similar taste throughout the nation. It has been already observed that tournaments were the favourite diversion, and that military parade was the ruling taste. Some historians represent the kingdom as immersed in debauchery and licentiousness; but these are only loose and general remarks, not substantiated by the evidence of facts. The history of this reign is far from proving that either the court or the nation was more vicious than in the ages preceding. The contrary even appears to be the case. The spirit of chivalry, which was a mixture of love, generosity, and valour, served to soften the ferocity of the age. Luxury indeed, had greatly increased in this reign; but whatever Monkish writers or modern fanatics may say on the subject, increasing luxury is a mark of increasing civilization.

The luxury and splendour which characterised, in a peculiar manner, the reign of Edward III. were far from resembling the

diffused elegance of modern times. It was entirely confined to the prelates, the nobles, the military men, and a few opulent merchants. The free burghs had increased in wealth, population, and influence; but the peasantry were still in the same abject state of indigence and slavery as they had been from time immemorial. The following statement of exports and imports in the year 1354, exhibits an accurate view of English commerce, and gives a more just idea of the contracted limits of the national luxury than could be conveyed by any indefinite description.*

EXPORTS.

| | £. | s. | d. |
|-------------------------------|---------|----|----|
| Wool and fells..... | 277,606 | 2 | 9 |
| Leather..... | 96 | 2 | 6 |
| Coarse cloth and worsted..... | 16,266 | 18 | 4 |
| Customs..... | 215 | 18 | 7 |
| | 294,184 | 17 | 3 |

Amount in modern money.....£282,554 11 6

IMPORTS.

| | £. | s. | d. |
|---|--------|----|----|
| Fine cloth..... | 11,068 | 12 | 0 |
| Wax..... | 815 | 7 | 5 |
| Wine, 1939½ Tons, at £2. per ton, } amounting, with customs, to..... } | 3,841 | 30 | 0 |
| Linens, merceries, groceries, &c..... | 22,943 | 6 | 10 |
| Customs on ditto..... | 285 | 18 | 3 |
| | 48,970 | 3 | 6 |

Amount in modern money....£.146,910 10 6

* Records of the Excheq. 27th year, Edward III. ap. And. Hist. Comm. vol. I.

From the amount of the imports, it is evident that luxury was confined to a very small part of the nation, that trade was yet at a very low ebb, and that the customs made only a very inconsiderable part of the public revenue. It is equally evident that the woollen manufacture, which dates its commencement from this reign,* was, notwithstanding the efforts of the king and the parliament, yet in a state of insignificance.† The state of commerce in different ages is the best criterion of the general state of society, and, by a comparative view of the exports and imports of the fourteenth and the eighteenth or nineteenth century, we may form a tolerably accurate idea of the superior elegance and refinement of modern times.

* It is asserted by some authors that the coarse woollen manufactures of Yorkshire were established in the reign of Henry II. Vide Littleton's Hist. Henry II. vol. 1.

† Mill. Hist. Eng. Govern. 2. p. 383.—In the tenth year of Edward III. A. D. 1337, an act was passed prohibiting the exportation of wool; but it was soon found necessary to grant licences to export that commodity, as the English were not sufficiently expert in the manufacture of cloth. Vide Rym. Fœd. Tom. 4. p. 793, &c. Mill. Hist. English Govern. 2. p. 382.

RICHARD II.

RICHARD, son of the Black Prince, succeeded to the throne of his grandfather, Edward III. The young king was only ten years of age, but the memory of his illustrious progenitors endeared him to the English, and he was crowned amidst the acclamations of his subjects. His uncle, the duke of Lancaster, assumed the reins of government during his minority; but he found the administration of affairs perplexed with various difficulties. His support of Wickliffe had rendered him an object of dislike to the Londoners: by the abuse of his power towards the end of the last reign, he had incurred the ill will of the nation; and under these and other disadvantages he had to contend with the superior genius and enterprising spirit of Charles V. king of France, whose watchful eye observed every circumstance that could redound to his advantage.

The unaccountable neglect of public affairs which characterized the court of Edward III. towards the close of his reign, was sensibly

felt soon after the accession of his grandson. The truce between England and France had expired on the 1st of April preceding the coronation of Richard, without any preparations being made by the English for renewing the war. The case was extremely different in France, where Charles was diligently employed in preparing a military and naval force. When that monarch was informed that the infirmities of Edward had rendered him unable to act, he gave orders for levying troops in all parts of France, so that when he heard of his death, he was ready to bring five armies into the field, and soon made himself master of all Guienne, except Bourdeaux.* He also equipped a numerous fleet, and as the English were wholly unprepared, the French made descents on different parts of their coast; and having burned Hastings, Portsmouth, Dartmouth, and Plymouth, defeated a body of troops assembled by the prior of Lewis, and plundered the Isle of Wight, they retired with a plentiful booty. All these disasters were imputed to the duke of Lancaster, and his brother the earl of Cambridge; and the people openly complained of their neglect in not guarding the

* Hen. Ab. Chron. ad An. 1378.

coasts, without considering that they had neither a fleet, nor troops, nor money. The castle of Roxborough also being surprised by the Scots, this loss increased the popular discontent, as every misfortune was attributed to the negligence of the ministers.

While the nation was thus dissatisfied, the parliament met in the month of October, and settled the administration of the government during the king's minority. Proper persons were appointed to take care of the king's education, and his three uncles, the Dukes of Lancaster and Buckingham, and the earl of Cambridge, with the bishops of London and Salisbury, and several lords and knights, were declared joint regents. This was no small mortification to the duke of Lancaster, who had flattered himself with the expectation of being sole regent; but the parliament resolved not to trust the whole management of affairs to those who were suspected of having private views that were incompatible with the public welfare. At the same time a liberal subsidy was granted for carrying on the war against France; but the money, instead of being intrusted to the ministers, was placed in the hands of Philpot and Walworth, two aldermen of London, who were ordered to direct its application.

Various expeditions were undertaking both against France and Scotland, but none of them were attended with success; and while England was unable to defend her own coasts, the people were astonished to see an armament sent to the assistance of the king of Portugal, against John, king of Castile. This measure originated in the private views of the duke of Lancaster, who, in consequence of his marriage with Constantia, the daughter of Pedro the Cruel, had assumed the title of king of Castile, and considered an alliance with Portugal as necessary to the support of his pretensions. Although the duke was not a favourite with the nation, he had so much influence with the council and the parliament, that, by representing the expediency of preventing the aggrandisement of the king of Castile, the ally of France, he obtained a grant of supplies for the assistance of Portugal, and sent out, under the command of his brother the earl of Cambridge, an expedition, which, in its trivial result, resembled those against France and Scotland. These unimportant wars, languidly carried on, and productive of no remarkable events, scarcely merit historical commemoration, as they can be little interesting to posterity. The most remarkable occurrence of this reign

was the violent struggle of the lower orders of the people to overturn the baronial system, and to annihilate all the distinctions established in society. Notwithstanding the increased population of the boroughs, and the numbers, who by war and other means had acquired freedom, yet the mass of the peasantry remained in a state of villanage, slaves to their lords, and transferable with the lands which they cultivated. These men had seen the charms of liberty, and panted for the enjoyment; but they found the weight of their yoke increased with the increasing luxury of their superiors. The triumphant reign of Edward III. had been the age of expensive gallantry, as well as of martial splendour; a spirit of profusion had entered with the taste for tournaments and military pomp: the luxurious magnificence of the great rendered them rapacious, as their wants could only be supplied by oppressing their poor dependents.

Through a long succession of ages, the people of every country in Europe had been the patient slaves of the nobles; and whenever they were roused to arms, it was only to determine who should be their masters, and not to procure their own emancipation. It has already been observed, that ever since the subversion

of the Roman empire, the system of villanage had been established throughout Europe; and the causes of its downfall have been in every country the same, although various circumstances have prevented its decline from being every where equally rapid. The inhabitants of cities first perceived their own strength, and kings willingly granted them freedom in order to counterbalance the power of the barons. In the fourteenth century the spirit of liberty began to be diffused among the peasants, whom rigorous and absurd laws had attached to the soil. Reason, however, will suggest, and history shews, in numerous instances, that the lower orders of the people must be, in a certain degree, enlightened and refined before they are properly qualified for emancipation from a yoke to which they have been from time immemorial accustomed. At the period now under consideration, a desire of liberty diffused among immense multitudes of semi-barbarians exerted itself in rude and terrible efforts, which threatened the total subversion of society.

The spirit of barbarous freedom had appeared in France about twenty-three years before, and produced such dreadful convulsions as to threaten universal destruc-

tion.* In the minority of Richard II. it manifested itself with not less fury in England. A capitation, or poll-tax, had been imposed by parliament, and being let out to farm, was rigorously collected. The peasantry were already exasperated by the abuses of villanage. The people of Kent and Essex, in particular, complained of the negligence of the government in not protecting their coasts against the frequent descents of the French ; and a general discontent was excited against the judges and all the agents of the law, who ruined the people by their extortions. While these predisposing causes were gradually operating to produce a revolt, they accidentally received a sudden and violent stimulus. A collector of the poll-tax, demanding of Walter Tyler, of Deptford, the sum requisite for one of his daughters, the father affirmed that she was under the age specified by the act. The brutal collector attempting to ascertain the truth, by an act of indecency, the incensed father instantly knocked out his brains with a hammer. The spectators ap-

* In the year 1356, when king John was prisoner in England, the peasantry of France, exasperated almost to madness, by the oppression of their Lords, resolved to extirpate all the nobles, and were not reduced until they had made the most dreadful devastations. The whole military force of the kingdom was found necessary to suppress this insurrection.

plauded the action : In an instant the populace of Deptford rose in arms; and from that place the spirit of rebellion rapidly spread through Kent and Essex, where the minds of the people were already in a ferment. In a short time Walter, commonly called Wat Tyler, who was chosen by the insurgents as their leader, saw himself at the head of a hundred thousand men. This ferocious multitude liberated all the prisoners confined in the different goals. Among these was a priest of Maidstone, named John Ball, who, by his seditious sermons, raised the fury of the populace to the utmost height. The doctrine which he inculcated was that all men being descended from Adam, there ought to be no distinction, and in consequence that it was the duty of the insurgents to reduce the world to a perfect equality. In conformity to this principle they resolved to extirpate all the nobility, and destroy all that held any distinguished office. They accordingly cut off the heads of all the lords, gentlemen, judges, and professors of the law, that were so unfortunate as to fall into their hands. After glutting their fury with numerous victims, they advanced towards London, and halted at Blackheath, where Wat Tyler reviewed his army.

Richard, on receiving intelligence of their approach to the capital, sent to know their demands. They replied that they desired the king to come and confer with them in person. Their request being debated in the council, was rejected by the advice of Simon Sudbury, archbishop of Canterbury, and Robert de Hales, prior of St. John, high treasurer of England. On this the insurgents immediately marched to London, and possessed themselves of the borough of Southwark. London bridge had then gates, which being shut at their approach, might for some time have stopped their impetuosity ; but the city mob opened them in spite of the magistrates. They then entered the city, where their ravages were such as might be expected from so numerous and ferocious a rabble. They immediately began to annihilate all appearances of grandeur and distinction, and set fire to the houses of those whom they deemed their enemies. The Savoy, the duke of Lancaster's palace, the hospital of St. John's, Clerkenwell, the archbishop's palace, the Temple, with all the writings kept there, were consumed by the flames ; and the houses of the judges, lords, and principal citizens, shared the same fate. The foreign merchants, particularly the Flemings, against whom they

were extremely incensed, being above all others the objects of their vengeance, were dragged from the churches, where they had taken sanctuary, and instantly massacred. Amidst this tremendous scene of universal confusion, while London resembled a town taken by storm, and immense quantities of rich furniture, plate, and valuable merchandise were destroyed; it is worthy of remark that the insurgents appropriated nothing to their own use, but committed all to the flames.

Having met with no opposition in the city, the rebels resolved to attack the Tower, the garrison of which, consisting of twelve hundred men, being intimidated at their approach, opened the gates. Here they found the archbishop of Canterbury and the high treasurer, and instantly cut off their heads. After this, dividing themselves into three bodies, Wat Tyler, with about thirty thousand men, remained in the vicinity of the Tower: Jack Straw, with the insurgents of Essex, amounting to about sixty thousand, marched into the city; and the third body encamped upon Mile-end Green.

During these transactions, the king and his council perceiving the impossibility of stemming the course of so overwhelming a

torrent, were in the utmost perplexity. The urgency of the case suggested the necessity of offering the insurgents a charter, abolishing villanage, and granting a general pardon. The people of Essex, although they were in full possession of the city, readily accepted the proposal ; and the charter being properly authenticated, they returned peaceably home. Tyler and his associates proved less tractable ; but as he professed a willingness to enter into a negociation with the king himself, Richard, with a few attendants, repaired to Smithfield, and sent to invite him to a conference. The demagogue immediately moved forward at the head of his troops ; and arriving at the place of conference, Tyler and the king being on horseback, the former demanded not only the abolition of villanage, but also that all parks, chaces, and warrens, should be thrown open and made common, so that every man might have liberty to hunt, fish, and fowl, in every part of the kingdom. While he was making these demands, he lifted up his sword several times in a menacing manner. This insolence so excited the indignation of Sir William Walworth, mayor of London, who attended the king, that, without considering the danger to which he exposed his royal master, he discharged such a blow with his

sword, on the head of the demagogue, that he laid him dead at his feet.* The insurgents, seeing the fall of their leader, exhorted one another to revenge his death; and their bows were already bent for the execution of their purpose, when the king, although not yet sixteen years of age, riding up to them, with an admirable presence of mind, cried out, "What, my lieges, will you kill your king? be not concerned for the loss of your leader: I, myself, will be your general: follow me into the field and you shall have whatever you desire."

The insurgents immediately desisted from their purpose. Struck with the condescension of their king they followed him as if by a mechanical impulse. No sooner were they come into the fields, than they saw marching towards them a body of a thousand armed citizens, whom the mayor had expeditiously raised, and placed under the conduct of an experienced officer. Terrified at the sight, they imagined that the whole city was ready to attack them; and the foremost ranks throwing down their arms begged for quarter. The rest immediately followed their example,

* This scene is well represented by an excellent painting now in the Guildhall at London.

and thus, in a few moments, this numerous and ferocious multitude was dispersed in a manner almost miraculous.

But it was not in Kent and Essex alone that the spirit of insurrection possessed the lower orders of the people. While the peasantry of these counties were threatening the court and the metropolis with destruction, John Ball and John Wraw, two seditious priests, excited the populace of Suffolk to revolt, and, assembling a mob of fifty thousand men, committed numberless enormities. Among others the chief justice, Sir John Cavendish, fell a victim to their fury. They also burned all the ancient charters in the abbey of St. Edmund's-Bury, and in the university of Cambridge. At the same time Littester, an inn-keeper, or, according to others, a dyer, of Norwich, headed another body of insurgents, and put to death all the judges and lawyers that fell into his hands. As for the nobles and gentlemen this insolent demagogue obliged them to serve him on their knees, or, in case of their refusal, immediately ordered his followers to strike off their heads. While these tremendous scenes of popular fury threatened the extinction of the higher classes, and the total subversion of social order, it was impossible that the govern-

ment should act with the promptitude required by an emergency which was without any example in the history of the kingdom. In such a state of universal confusion, it became necessary that private persons, without waiting for orders from the court, should endeavour to free themselves from the impending danger. Henry Spencer, bishop of Norwich, a prelate of great courage, thought it his duty to make use of arms as well as of prayers on so extraordinary an occasion, when the clergy and laity were equally menaced with ruin. Putting himself at the head of a few loyal subjects, he attacked and defeated the insurgents with a terrible slaughter. Two of their principal leaders, Littester and Wraw, being taken prisoners, the priest was beheaded on the spot; and his colleague was sent to London to receive the reward of his crimes.

This insurrection being so speedily crushed by the vigorous exertions of the bishop of Norwich, the king, by the advice of his council, resolved to chastise the rebels. Hitherto we have seen with horror the ferocity of the people: at this moment we are called to reprobate the injustice of the court. The charter of privileges and pardon, granted to the insurgents, was revoked by a royal proclama-

July 2,
A. D. 1381. tion, and the barons were ordered to levy troops of unquestionable loyalty and lead them directly to London. An army of forty thousand men being expeditiously raised, was divided into two bodies, one of which proceeded into Kent, and the king at the head of the other marched against the people of Essex, who were again beginning to rise in consequence of the revocation of the charters. The sudden approach of the royal army, however, totally disconcerted their measures; and they were easily defeated. Great numbers fell with arms in their hands; and above fifteen hundred, among whom were many of their principal leaders, are said to have died by the hand of the executioner.*

This insurrection of the peasantry, when considered in every point of view, is one of the most interesting portions of English history, and far more important than the cabals of barons and bishops and the intrigues of courtiers, which disgrace the annals of almost every reign. The demands of the insurgents have been condemned, by historians, as insolent and unreasonable. Such they would undoubtedly appear to their

* Rapin. l. p. 456.

lordly oppressors ; but their principal objects were only that freedom which is so gloriously established and secured by the present constitution of England. Their demand of the abolition of villanage must, in our days, meet with universal approbation: that of Wat Tyler, who required a general liberty of hunting, fishing, and fowling, was, indeed, less founded on reason: such a privilege, without being necessary to the comfortable subsistence of the poor, would have been inimical to their industry, and have withdrawn their attention from agricultural and mechanical pursuits. But the people, when possessed of power, seldom confine their expectations within the limits of reason and utility ; and it is no wonder that a haughty demagogue, who was master of the metropolis, should be somewhat extravagant in his demands.

The circumstances attending this insurrection, must be considered as extraordinary. History scarcely records an action more daring, and at the same time more imprudent, than that of the mayor of London, who killed the leader of so ferocious a body, at the head of thirty thousand followers, conscious of their own strength, and already prepared by scenes of blood and destruction

for the most desperate enterprises. Nor does history afford any instance of an action so unprincipled, as well as so inconsiderate, being followed by so peaceable consequences. This was undoubtedly owing to the admirable presence of mind displayed by Richard, and not to have been expected from a prince of his age. Royal condescension is often more powerful than arms, and popular commotions are always directed by irregular impulses; but yet it is somewhat wonderful that a body of thirty thousand insurgents, who had already shown themselves so daring and ferocious, should throw down their arms and beg for mercy on the first appearance of a few armed citizens. This circumstance serves strongly to shew the inefficiency of a mob, and how little the populace, without able leaders, without combination of plans and regularity of movements, is able to accomplish any great design.

The revocation of the charters of freedom and pardon granted on this occasion, and the numerous executions which followed in consequence, are mentioned by historians with only a slight degree of censure. These, however, ought to be marked with disapprobation by every friend of humanity. But our ancient annalists were neither philo-

sophers nor philanthropists. Influenced by the spirit of the times, they considered the interests of bishops and barons alone as worthy of attention, and forgot that the people had any claim to the common rights of mankind. Even when their statement of facts may be regarded as accurate, their moral pictures are generally misrepresentations. The frequent insurrections of the barons against their king, are called struggles for their privileges, or at least are spoken of without any severe censure. The insurrection of the plebians against the barons is branded with all the virulence of reproach. The punishment of insurgent nobles is called cruelty: the punishment of men struggling for their native freedom is denominated justice. In those days of oppression a prince might butcher his poorer subjects by thousands, without incurring much censure from historians: it was only when he laid hands on some of the nobles, or controlled their pretensions, that he was denominated a tyrant. At this period the rude outlines of the constitution had indeed been drawn; but the state of feudal slavery was nothing ameliorated; and after these struggles for freedom, the fetters of the peasantry were rendered, if possible, more galling. Two

acts of parliament, passed in this reign, shews the state of oppression in which that class of people were held. One of these of the 12th Rich. II. enacts, that no peasant above twelve years of age, shall be permitted to learn any trade. By the other it is enacted that no artificer, labourer, or servant, male or female, shall go out of one hundred into another, without a testimonial under the king's seal, on pain of being set in the stocks, and reconducted to his or her respective hundred or wapentake, unless sent on business by his or her "lord and master."* These statutes, contrasted with the freedom which every Englishman now enjoys under our happy constitution, shew that the complaints of the plebians were not unfounded, and that their demand of the abolition of villanage was just and reasonable; but their manner of endeavouring to acquire freedom was irregular and inconsistent with public safety. The grand misfortune was, that in those times, no liberties could be obtained, unless they were extorted by force.

The military events of this reign are scarcely worth mentioning, and the political transactions of Richard II. with foreign nations have had no influence on the state of

* Vide *And. Hist. Comm.* i. p. 383.

posterity. A wild croisade, undertaken in this reign, may be ranked among the many instances of the madness of nations. A schism had long divided the church, and at this period two Popes, Urban and Clement, divided the suffrages of christians by their pretensions to the chair of St. Peter. Two infallibles in opposition to each other, exhibited a phenomenon sufficient to puzzle a philosopher, and it was impossible that the people should know which was the true vicar of Christ. England, however, adhered to Urban, as France did to Clement. Each of them liberally bestowed on the other showers of excommunications and anathemas; but Urban resolved to join temporal to spiritual arms, as in using the latter alone both parties had equal advantages. He therefore published against Clement and his adherents a croisade, with the same indulgencies and privileges as had formerly been granted to those who took arms for the deliverance of Jerusalem from the infidels. Henry Spencer, bishop of Norwich, was declared general; and all classes of people in England, nobility, clergy, gentry, and plebians, engaged with ardour in this antichristian enterprise.

A. D. 1383. The parliament approving the undertaking, granted a liberal subsidy.

and the bishop, with an army of fifty thousand foot and two thousand horse, passed over to Calais. Having captured Graveline, Mardyke, and Dunkirk, and totally defeated the earl of Flanders with great slaughter, he advanced to Ypres. A mutiny in his army obliged him to raise the siege of that place, and to abandon his cannon;* but he afterwards gained a considerable victory over the French. This was the termination of his success. Charles VI. king of France, advancing with a numerous army, found means to surround the English; and the bishop general was obliged to purchase his retreat to England by surrendering the places which he had taken. Thus ended this extravagant croisade which had cost England a great number of men and vast sums of money, without being compensated by any advantage or rendering any service to the Pope.

The expedition of the Duke of Lancaster, for the purpose of placing himself
A. D. 1386. on the throne of Castile, was less romantic but equally pernicious to England. This grand object of the Duke had no small influence on the politics of the court of London; and by the forces of England and

* Wals. p. 299. It appears that since the battle of Crecy, cannon had become common in the English and French armies.

Portugal, he considered its attainment as possible. Having landed his army at Corunna, and reduced the province of Gallicia, August 9th
A. D. 1396. he obtained from the king of Castile a sum of money, in consideration of which he resigned his pretensions. He also concluded a treaty of marriage between his daughter and the eldest son of that monarch, and by that transaction paved the way for his posterity to ascend the throne of Castile.

Thus the public interest was sacrificed to the private views of the great. Although the posterity of John of Gaunt was eventually aggrandized by this expedition, the nation was burdened with the expence, and even saw its safety endangered by the formidable preparations of France, while the best troops of England were employed in Spain. Charles VI. taking advantage of an opportunity which appeared so favourable, resolved to make a grand effort for the conquest of England. His fleet is said to have consisted of twelve hundred and eighty-seven ships, and his army of sixty thousand men.* All Europe was astonished at his preparations, and anxiously expected the result. The expedition, however, was frustrated by some intrigues at the court of France, and the jealousy of the Duke

* Froiss. lib. 2. c. 178.—Tytrel, p. 904.

of Berry,* who, desirous of rendering the project abortive, delayed the embarkation till the season was too far advanced, and the English had so far completed their preparations as to have little to fear from an enemy. The levies had been made with such expedition and success, that an army of two hundred thousand men was speedily collected. A great part of these troops were cantoned within twenty miles round London, but being ill paid they lived at discretion and plundered the country.† The fear of invasion soon subsided. The French fleet was almost destroyed by a storm, and most of their ships were wrecked on the English coasts. After this no military events of importance took place between England and France, although it was not till the year 1396 that a truce of twenty-eight years was concluded between the two crowns, and confirmed by a treaty of marriage between Richard and Isabella, daughter of Charles VI.‡ The wars with Scotland also present only a scene of predatory expeditions, interrupted from time to time by temporary truces.

* Mezerai. Hen. Ab. Chron. An. 1386.

† Wals. p. 323.

‡ Rym. Ford. tom. 7. p. 802, &c.

The internal administration during this reign would afford ample materials for those historians who delight in fatiguing their readers with tedious details of the intrigues of a corrupt court, and the cavils of bishops and barons, who endeavoured sometimes to correct and sometimes to encourage royal weakness and ministerial profligacy. In his early youth Richard had completely alienated the affections of the lower orders; and it only remained to make the nobility his enemies. He had scarcely attained his seventeenth year when he began plainly to manifest his inclinations. But Richard was ruined by flatterers, who inspired him not only with extravagant notions of the royal prerogative but with too high an opinion of his own merit. His favourites obtained over him an entire ascendancy, and when the parliament presented an address, desiring their dismissal, he rashly answered, that "To please the parliament he would not turn out the meanest scullion in his kitchen."

Richard, by the advice of his ministers, formed the design of rendering himself absolute, and the judges were prevailed on to declare that the king was above the laws. The parliament was also to be converted into an engine of despotism; and, for that purpose,

he attempted to pack the House of Commons by ordering that no members should be returned except such as the king and his council should nominate. But it was found somewhat difficult to deprive the boroughs of their right of election, and the sheriffs informed him that it was impossible to comply with his orders. In spite, therefore, of the endeavours of the king, a free parliament was assembled, and its decisions proved fatal to the ministers. The archbishop of York, with the bishops of Durham and Chichester, and a number of lords and even of ladies, who had favoured the designs of the court, were banished, and their estates confiscated. The judges suffered the same punishment; and judge Tresilian, one of the chief advisers of Richard's arbitrary measures, was hanged, together with a number of knights and gentlemen. From these severities towards the ministers this was called the merciless parliament.*

The privy council was now completely changed; but no change was effected in the disposition of the king. Finding the maxims of the new ministers different from those which he had imbibed, he dismissed them

* Rapin and Tindal's notes, vol. 1. p. 465.

and appointed others who were more compliant with his will, and by whose advice he seized his uncle, the duke of Gloucester, the favourite of the nation, and caused him to be secretly conveyed to Calais, where he was murdered in prison.* In the mean while Richard, who loved pomp and magnificence more than any of his predecessors, spent immense sums in tournaments and splendid entertainments; and, although England was dreadfully afflicted with pestilence and famine, he discontinued none of his diversions nor retrenched any of his expences. In his kitchen alone three hundred domestics were employed, and the queen had the same number in her service; and it is said that this prince daily entertained six thousand persons.† Ambitious of surpassing in magnificence all the monarchs of Europe, he affected in every thing as great a profuseness as if he had possessed inexhaustible treasures. As his revenues were totally inadequate to his ex-

* The king coming to the duke's house in Essex, and pretending that his presence was necessary at a cabinet council, persuaded him to go with him, in the night, to London. In passing over Epping forest he was seized by some troops, placed in ambush, and conveyed on board a ship which was ready in the Thames for that purpose. Froiss. lib. 4. c. 33, &c.

† This must be a mistake of historians. It must rather be supposed that this number was entertained not daily but on particular occasions.

travagant expences, he tried to borrow money of the Londoners; and this appears to have been one of the means by which he intended to render himself independent of parliament. At first he sounded the inclinations of the citizens by asking a loan of only a thousand pounds. His views were frustrated: he experienced a mortifying refusal; but he soon met with an opportunity of revenging the affront. Under the pretext of a tumult of little consequence, raised by a baker's apprentice, he stripped the city of all its privileges, and took away its charter, which the citizens were obliged to redeem with a present of ten thousand pounds and two crowns of gold.* But, by these extortions, Richard made the city of London his enemy, a circumstance which at length contributed, in no small degree, to his ruin.

Arbitrary power was an object of which this monarch never lost sight. To this all his measures had a tendency, and although hated both by the people and the nobles, he found means at length to accomplish his purpose. Renewing his former attempt to have a parliament devoted to his will, he acted with deeper policy and met with greater

* Rapin I. p. 466.

success. His first precaution was to change all the sheriffs in the kingdom, and to admit none into that office but such as promised to be wholly subservient to his designs. He had taken the same precaution with respect to all officers that had credit and power in the counties and boroughs: so that by means of these agents he caused such representatives to be chosen as he had previously secured. If any whom the king disapproved were elected, the sheriffs had orders not to return them, but to cause others to be chosen; and as the members of the House of Commons were the judges of the affairs of election, he was able, by these means, to confirm or reject whomsoever he pleased. This is mentioned by historians as the first instance of packing a parliament.*

A. D. 1397. The national representation being thus modelled, the bishop of Exeter opened the session with a speech in which he laboured to prove that the power of the king was unlimited, and that those who attempted to set bounds to his authority deserved the highest punishment. In pursuance of this principle the parliament made no scruple of

* This year, 1397, Richard caused Westminster Hall to be taken down and began to repair it as it now stands. Stowe B. 6th, p. 48. Camd. Middlesex.

sacrificing, to the passions of the monarch and the interested views of his favourites, the most distinguished lords of the realm. The archbishop of Canterbury was impeached of high treason, for having been one of the commissioners, appointed by the parliament of 1386, for inspecting the administration of public affairs, and on this singular charge was condemned to banishment, and his estate was confiscated to the king's use. The earls of Arundel and Warwick being accused of having formerly opposed the royal authority, and for which crime they had received the king's pardon nine years ago, received sentence of death: the former was executed, and the punishment of the latter was changed into perpetual exile. Under the pretext of dispatching more regularly the public business, the parliament then invested a certain number of commissioners with the authority of the whole House; and by an unprecedented act, the whole power of the nation was devolved on the king, twelve peers and six commoners.* These were all at the king's devotion, and thus the government of England was rendered as despotic as that of Turkey.

Nothing now seemed able to shake the absolute authority which Richard had assumed.

* Tyrrel p. 985. Cott. abridg. p. 374.

Those who would have been the most capable of opposing his views had been put to death or sent into exile: others were gained by offices, honours, and liberal grants. The great officers of the crown and the governors of counties and towns were all devoted to the king; and all the magistrates, and men of credit and influence in the boroughs, were ready to support the regal power in its greatest extent. Had Richard, indeed, been endowed with the prudence of Augustus and some other princes, who enjoyed the affections of their subjects, and endeavoured to conceal the authority which they possessed, or had he, like Edward III. dazzled the eyes of the people by his martial exploits, his despotism might now have been firmly established. But this infatuated and unfortunate prince possessed neither political sagacity nor military fame. Surrounded by flatterers he imagined their voice to be that of the public, and considered five or six hundred persons, who composed his parliament, with a few magistrates and leading men in the counties and boroughs, as the whole of the nation.

Fatal experience at length convinced Richard of his mistake. The giddy monarch, having attained the summit of despotism, reposed in a false security, and suffered himself

to be deluded by the flattering prospect of a nation at his feet. Every day produced some instance of his capricious exercise of that arbitrary power which he ought to have concealed under the masque of moderation and equity. The duke of Hereford having accused the duke of Norfolk of speaking disrespectfully of the king, the latter denied the charge, and for want of evidence the lords in parliament decreed that the matter should be decided by single combat. Coventry was the place appointed for the duel, at which the king was resolved to be present. But at the moment when the two dukes had entered the lists, Richard forbade them to proceed, and ordered the heralds to interpose. And although neither were convicted of any crime, and only one of them could be guilty, he sentenced both to banishment, the duke of Norfolk for life, and the duke of Hereford for ten years: the former went to Venice where he soon after died: the latter retired to France.

This act of arbitrary power was followed by another which equally showed the avarice and injustice of the tyrant. Soon after the departure of the duke of Hereford, his father,

Feb. 3, John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster,
A. D. 1396. died, and his honours and vast

estates devolved on his son. But the bait was too alluring not to be seized by an avaricious and absolute monarch. Richard, by a sentence more unjust even than the former, decreed that the exile of the duke of Hereford should be perpetual, and confiscated his estates.

The despotism of the king and the rapacity of his ministers now knew no bounds. Pretences were no longer necessary for the demanding of subsidies. Every lord, bishop, and rich burgess in the kingdom was obliged to lend money to the sovereign, although it was known that repayment was never intended. On a charge of having supported the confederate lords and the parliament of 1388, seventeen counties were condemned as guilty of treason, and the property of the inhabitants being adjudged to the king, the lords, gentlemen, and rich burgesses were forced to redeem their estates by signing obligations, in which a blank was left for the sum which the king pleased afterwards to insert.* It was impossible that a nation should long bear such extortions; and the English soon met with an opportunity of shaking off the yoke.

* Rapin I. p. 470.

A revolt in Ireland requiring the presence of Richard, he passed over into that country with a numerous army ; and in several encounters with the rebels, he displayed a valour which shewed that his disinclination to war was to be ascribed to his education rather than to a want of personal courage. But while his vanity was flattered by his successes in Ireland, a conspiracy was formed in England to deprive him of his crown. Those who were most devoted to his interests had accompanied him in his Irish expedition ; and he had left behind him a whole nation of malecontents. After several conferences, information was transmitted to the exiled archbishop of Canterbury, that all England was ready to rise, that nothing was wanted but a leader of distinction, and that if the duke of Hereford, now duke of Lancaster, would undertake to deliver the nation from tyranny he might rely on a powerful support. The duke, stimulated by personal injuries and by ambition, gladly accepted the offer. Accompanied by the archbishop of Canterbury and only eighty men, he landed at Ravenspur,* in Yorkshire, and was soon joined by the earl of Northumber-

July 4th,
A. D. 1399.

* Ravenspur was situated near the Spurn Point, in Holderness, and has long since been swallowed up by the sea.

land, Henry Percy his son, the earl of Westmoreland, and several others of the nobility.* This was only the beginning of his success. The concourse of people, who flocked to his standard, was so great, that he soon saw himself at the head of an army of sixty thousand men.

In the mean while the duke of York, the king's uncle, who acted as regent, together with the lords of the council, knowing the disposition of the citizens of London, retired to St. Albans. Soon after their departure the metropolis declared for the duke of Lancaster, who, without discovering that he had any designs on the crown, published a manifesto, in which he pretended that he had taken arms only to redress his own grievances and those of the nation. The regent attempted to levy troops but without success, and the lords of the council, seeing themselves in danger of being sacrificed to the public hatred, retired to Bristol and shut themselves up in the castle.

The duke of Lancaster did not neglect to improve his advantages. Being invited to London by the citizens, he entered the metropolis in triumph, and immediately after-

* Tyrrel p. 996.

wards marched to Bristol. The gates of that city being opened at his approach, he assaulted the castle, where the lords of the council were retired, and in the space of four days forced it to surrender at discretion. The fury of the people against the earl of Wiltshire, and the other ministers, was so great, that the duke of Lancaster, judging it expedient to sacrifice them to the public vengeance, ordered them to be led to execution. These successes induced the whole kingdom to declare in favour of the duke; and the regent himself, seeing it impossible to stem the torrent, followed the general example.

While these things were transacting in England, Richard was in Ireland totally ignorant of the defection of his subjects. The contrary winds which, during the space of more than three weeks, interrupted the communication between the two countries, prevented him from receiving any intelligence. But as soon as he heard of the duke of Lancaster's invasion, he resolved to return immediately to England, and give battle to the enemy. But the want of vessels to transport his whole army at once caused a delay that contributed to his ruin. He had sent the earl of Salisbury to levy troops in Wales, promising to follow within the space of six

days; but the wind changing to the east, kept him eighteen days longer in Ireland. The earl succeeded so well as to levy an army of forty thousand men; but the king not appearing at the time appointed, and a report being spread of his death, this numerous force immediately dispersed.

Richard, landing soon after at Milford Haven proceeded to Carmarthen, to join the earl of Salisbury. But on being informed of the dispersion of the Welsh troops and the general revolt of the nobility and the people, he perceived his case to be desperate. Some of his officers persuaded him to lead them to battle against the enemy: some advised him to return and fortify himself in Ireland; and others thought it the most eligible to take refuge with the king of France, his father-in-law, by whose powerful aid he might recover his kingdom. But amidst this variety of councils, the unfortunate and infatuated king, seeing dangers on every side, and not knowing whom to trust, resolved to throw himself on the generosity of his enemy, the worst measure that could be adopted by a prince in his situation. Pursuant to this pusillanimous and fatal resolution, he withdrew privately from his army, and shut himself up in Conway castle, near Chester, from whence he sent to

inform the duke of Lancaster that he was ready to submit to such terms as the latter should think fit to prescribe. The archbishop of Canterbury and the earl of Northumberland being sent to begin the negotiations, the king offered to resign his crown and retire to a private life. He then requested a personal interview with the duke: the proposal was accepted, and both parties met at Flint for that purpose. The king received his rival with a cheerful countenance, saying, "Cousin
" of Lancaster, you are welcome." The duke bowing three times to the ground, replied, " My lord, the king, I am come sooner than
" you expected, because the common report
" of your people is, that you have, for one
" and twenty years, governed with rigour and
" indiscretion, so that they are far from being
" satisfied with your administration; but if
" it please God I will help you to govern
" them better for the future." To this declaration the king answered, "Fair cousin,
" since it pleases you it pleases us also."* After this conversation the duke of Lancaster carried the king to Chester, and from thence

* The author of the Chronicle says, these were the very words, and that he himself heard them spoken. Tindal's notes on Rapis, l. p. 472.

to London.* On their approach to the metropolis, the people, issuing in crowds from the city, received the duke with acclamations of excessive applause, while they loaded the king with the bitterest reproaches. The unfortunate monarch was then conducted to the Tower, where he was confined till the duke of Lancaster completed the revolution. This, however, was speedily performed. The duke having the king in his power made use of his name and authority to summon a parliament. Previous to its meeting he repaired to the Tower, attended by a great number of lords, in whose presence Richard delivered up the crown and sceptre with all the other ensigns of royalty, and, by an instrument signed with his own hand, confessed himself unworthy and unfit to reign. But as soon as September 29, the parliament met, the two Houses A. D. 1399. not deeming his voluntary resignation sufficient to sanction their proceedings, ordered articles of impeachment to be drawn up, and in consequence of the crimes laid to his charge, the king was solemnly deposed, after having sat twenty-two years on the throne of England.

* Rapin remarks that in forty-seven days after his landing at Ravenspur, the duke had marched to London, Bristol, and Chester, and back again to London. Vol. i. p. 472.

Thus ended the reign of Richard II. a reign peculiarly distinguished in English history, by the luxurious magnificence of the court, and the schemes of the king and his ministers to render the monarchy absolute. It is indeed a matter which must excite wonder, that so weak and indolent a prince as Richard, assisted by counsellors of the same description, should have so far succeeded in so difficult an undertaking. But this success proved his ruin. Although he attained the summit of his wishes, he did not possess the abilities necessary for maintaining his standing; and he was easily hurled from his high elevation. When we consider the state of the kingdom in those times, and the early age at which he had raised himself to absolute authority, it appears not improbable that if Richard II. had possessed the same talents as some princes who are mentioned in history, he might have lived long enough to consolidate the fabric which he had taken such pains to erect; and the government of England might have been as despotic as any that ever existed in Europe.*

* In this reign was introduced the custom of wearing shoes with enormously long piked toes, fastened to the knees with chains of silver, and also the fashion among ladies of riding on side saddles, for before they always rode astride. The ladies wore high attire on their heads, piked horns, and long trained gowns. Stowe's Ann.

HENRY IV.

NEITHER the resignation nor the deposition of Richard could give the duke of Lancaster a right to the crown. As the king had no issue, the presumptive heir was Edmund Mortimer, earl of March, who was descended from Lionel, duke of Clarence, third son of Edward III. The duke of Lancaster being the son of John of Gaunt, the fourth son of Edward III. was one degree further from the throne. The right of Roger Mortimer, father of the earl of March, had, in 1385, been recognised by the parliament, which had declared him the successor of Richard, in case that prince should die without issue. But the duke of Lancaster having on his side the parliament and the whole nation, claimed the crown in these words: "In the name of
 " the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy
 " Ghost, I, Henry of Lancaster, challenge
 " this realm of England, and the crown, &c.
 " as I am descended by the right line of the
 " blood from the good lord king Henry III.
 " and through the right that God of his grace

“hath given me, with help of my kin and
 “my friends to recover it, the which realm
 “was in point to be undone for default of
 “governors, and undoing of the good laws.”

The duke having thus preferred his claim, in which he artfully omitted any mention of Edward III. but deduced his descent from Henry, and reminded the nation of his own services, the parliament decreed that Henry of Lancaster should be proclaimed
 September 30, A. D. 1399. king, which was performed the same day, and the right of the earl of March being thus set aside, laid the foundation of a contest which, at a future period, drenched England with blood.*

Henry IV. ascended the throne at the mature and vigorous age of thirty-three. He was crowned with great solemnity, and
 October 13, A. D. 1399. in order to counterpoise the defect of his title, and inspire the people with veneration for their new sovereign, he caused himself to be anointed with a particular oil, said to be brought by the Virgin mother of God to St. Thomas of Canterbury. A plausible story

* Edmund, earl of March, was the grandson of Philippa, only daughter of Lionel the third son of Edward III. and great grandson of Roger Mortimer, who, in the beginning of the reign of Edward III. was executed as a traitor; but as he was condemned without any trial, the sentence was, in 1354, reversed by the parliament. Cotton's abridg. p. 309.

was invented to account for its not being employed in the unction of former kings; and every device was used to authenticate the holy legend, which political craft had fabricated in order to impose on popular ignorance. So long, indeed, as the world exhibits a mixture of vice and folly, mankind will never be governed by reason alone without some degree of deception; and history shews that, on extraordinary occasions, some political or religious imposture, so framed as to suit the current ideas of the times, has mostly been thought necessary to influence the minds of the multitude.

Henry had need of every precaution. Popular affection and popular fury are frequently violent, but generally fluctuating. The tyranny of Richard had drawn upon him the enmity of the people; but misfortunes, especially those of the great, have the peculiar effect of converting hatred into pity. The calamities of the deposed king began to excite the compassion of the nation; and the right of Henry was controverted by several of the nobles. While the new king was employed in taking measures for his own security and the regulation of the kingdom, the dukes of Albemarle, Surrey, and Exeter, with the bishop of Carlisle and the earls of Gloucester

and Salisbury, formed the design of depriving him of his life, and replacing Richard on the throne. The plan of the conspiracy was to assassinate the king at a tournament at Oxford, and it was almost by a miracle that he escaped the danger. Each of the conspirators had, in writing, a copy of all the particulars, in order to be certain of the part that he was to act; and the duke of Albemarle being on a visit to his father, the duke of York, let fall his paper, which the latter having found and examined, discovered the whole plot.* The duke of York, who was surety for the allegiance of his son, being sensible of the danger to which his own life was exposed, resolved to give information of the matter to the king, and for that purpose immediately set out for Windsor. The son being apprized of his father's intention, went by a shorter way and obtained his pardon. Henry, indeed, at first doubted of the truth of the duke of Albemarle's report, suspecting it to be a scheme of that nobleman to ruin the dukes of Exeter and Salisbury, and the others whom he had named. But the arrival of the duke of York, with the paper, only a few moments after, put an end

* Rapin says that the duke of York snatched the paper from his son's bosom. Vol. I. p. 469.

to his doubt. The king, therefore, being convinced of his danger, instead of proceeding to Oxford, where he was expected the next day by the conspirators, began to take vigorous measures for his security.

The lords, in the mean while, seeing that neither the king nor the duke of Albemarle came to Oxford, began to apprehend that their plot was discovered; and the result of the inquiries which they made soon confirmed their suspicions. Their situation being desperate, they resolved, if possible, to accomplish by force what they had failed of effecting by stratagem. They had engaged in the plot a priest named Maudlin, who so exactly resembled Richard II. as scarcely to be distinguishable from that prince either by stature, feature, or countenance.* This man, being arrayed in royal robes, pretended to be Richard himself, who had escaped from prison, and was come to implore the assistance of his subjects. Maudlin personated so well the deposed monarch, and the imposture was so well supported by the lords, that numbers of people flocked to their standard. The army of the conspirators soon became considerable,

* Tindal's notes on Rapin.—Tindal says he had been one of Richard's chaplains.—Rapin calls him a domestic. Vol. 1. p. 468.

and they marched to Windsor with the intention of seizing the king. But finding that Henry had retired to London, a diversity of opinions, concerning their future operations, occasioned delays which afforded him sufficient leisure not only to secure the metropolis, but to levy an army of twenty thousand men. With this force, though greatly inferior to those of the rebels, he resolved to give them battle, and supposing that they would take the road for London, he encamped on Hounslow Heath. This resolution of Henry was of incalculable advantage to his affairs. It inspired his partisans with courage, and caused numbers to join his standard, while it intimidated the rebels who dared not to hazard an action. They retired, therefore, to Cirencester, where they encamped: the generals took up their quarters in the town: the army lay without in the camp. The duke of Surrey and the earl of Salisbury lodged at one inn, and the duke of Exeter and the earl of Gloucester at another. But their want of experience in war causing them to neglect to place guards at the gates, the mayor of the town took advantage of this oversight to render a signal service to the king. Having privately mustered the inhabitants, he assaulted, at once, the two inns

where the four generals were lodged. The duke of Surrey and the earl of Salisbury, after bravely defending themselves a great part of the night, being grievously wounded, were made prisoners, and, by the order of the mayor, instantly beheaded. The duke of Exeter and the earl of Gloucester escaped out of the town, but found the camp deserted; for the soldiers hearing the tumult, and imagining that the king's army was there, were seized with a panic and sought safety in flight. The two lords endeavoured to escape out of the kingdom, but were taken, and lost their heads on the scaffold. Maudlin the priest met with no better fate: being taken in his flight towards Scotland, he was brought to London, where he was hanged and quartered.

In all probability this rash and ill-conducted enterprise accelerated Richard's fate. All historians agree that his death was unnatural; but the diversity of their accounts shews the difficulty of obtaining correct information in regard to actions and events that are not public and conspicuous. The account given by Fabian, and generally received by modern historians, is, that Sir Piers Exton, with eight attendants, coming to Pontefract castle, where the unfortunate

A. D. 1400. monarch was confined, Richard no sooner saw him enter, than considering himself as a lost man, he resolved to sell his life as dearly as possible, and wresting a poll-ax from one of the assassins, laid four of them dead at his feet; but being overpowered, he was at length killed by a blow of a battle-axe. But Stowe says that he was kept for fifteen days without victuals or drink, till he died of hunger and cold. Polydor Virgil also affirms that he was starved to death. And Hector Boethius has attempted to persuade the world that he made his escape into Scotland, where he gave himself up to a contemplative life, and died in peaceful obscurity!!! Such are the uncertain accounts of historians, of which this is far from being an uncommon instance.*

These commotions encouraged the Scots to break the truce that subsisted between the two kingdoms; and a series of hostilities ensued, which, however, produced no important result. The Welsh, at the same time, considered this as a favourable juncture for

* Some English historians say that Charles VI. king of France, made vast preparations for invading England, in order to restore Richard to his throne. But none of the French historians mention any such design, or any such preparations. It is certain that Henry pretended to apprehend an invasion from France; but it seems to have been only a device of his policy for amusing the people, and reconciling them to the death of Richard as a necessary measure.

recovering their independence. Owen Glendour, whose name is yet famous in Wales, inspired them with the design, and put himself at their head. This man, though only a private gentleman, possessed every qualification requisite for such an undertaking, if forces so inconsiderable as those of the Welsh could have afforded any hope of success. Notwithstanding the inferiority of his means, he gained several victories, which could procure him only a temporary triumph without any lasting advantage. In the north the English armies were successful. The Scots having invaded England, the earl of Northumberland, with Henry Hotspur his son, defeated them with great slaughter at Halidown Hill.*

May 7th,
A. D. 1402.

According to the general accounts ten thousand Scots fell in this battle; and their general, the earl of Douglas, with many other lords and officers of distinction were made prisoners.

This victory, in appearance so advantageous to Henry, gave rise to a quarrel which threatened the subversion of his throne. He required that the persons of quality taken at Halidown Hill should be at his own disposal; but the earl of Northumberland, who expected large

* Vide Buchan. Hist. lib. 10.

sums for their ransom, refused to deliver up his prisoners. This nobleman had contributed, more than any other, to place Henry on the throne, and he considered himself as able to hurl him from that elevated station. He therefore projected a scheme, in which the Scots and the Welsh were to combine and assist him with their forces in placing Mortimer, earl of March, on the English throne. The proper measures being taken with Owen Glendour and the Scots, the confederates appeared in arms before the king was apprized of their design. Henry having an army in readiness, immediately put himself at its head. The earl of Northumberland falling sick at that juncture, his brother and son marched to join the Welsh army which had entered Shropshire. The king, in the meanwhile, put his troops in motion, and advanced against the confederates, who were encamped near Shrewsbury. At that place the contest was decided by a bloody battle, in the beginning of which the rebels had greatly the advantage. The king had his horse killed under him, and his son, the prince of Wales, was wounded in fighting by his side; but by seasonably calling in his body of reserve, he changed the fate of the day, and gained a complete victory. Henry

July 22d,
A. D. 1403.

Percy, surnamed Hotspur, son of the earl of Northumberland, and reputed the bravest man at that time in England, was slain in the battle; and his four quarters were, by the king's command, fixed on poles, and exposed at the side of the highway. The earl of Worcester, being made prisoner, was beheaded, and his head was placed on London bridge.

Henry had no sooner obtained this signal success, than he marched towards the northern counties, which he considered as the focus of the rebellion. On his arrival at York, he took every possible means to secure the fidelity of the inhabitants; and being desirous of terminating this troublesome affair, he offered a full pardon to the earl of Northumberland, on condition that he should submit, annexing a dreadful menace in case he should persist in opposing his sovereign. The earl having heard of the death of his son and his brother, and seeing himself without any other resource, gladly accepted the offered favour.* But it was not long before his restless disposition caused his ruin.

This rebellion was scarcely extinguished before another broke out. Richard Scrope,

* The king left him all his estates, except the Isle of Man, which he had given him in the commencement of his reign.

archbishop of York, engaged several lords in a confederacy for dethroning the king. The earl of Northumberland, notwithstanding his late pardon, together with Thomas Mowbray, earl marshal, the lords Bardolph, Hastings, Fauconbridge, and several other lords and gentlemen, entered into the plot, and assembled a very considerable army at York, the place appointed for their general rendezvous, where they published a manifesto against the king, and posted it upon the doors of the churches.*

Some time before the king received intelligence of this new revolt, he had dispatched a body of troops under the command of Ralph Neville, earl of Westmoreland, to oppose the Scots, who seemed inclined to recommence hostilities. The earl was near York when he first heard of the insurrection; but finding his force not sufficiently numerous to cope with the rebels, he resolved to have recourse to stratagem. In this view he sent a messenger to their chiefs, to inform them that as he was so well convinced of their prudence, as not to doubt but the object of their taking arms was for the public

* The motive assigned for this rebellion of the archbishop, was a desire of avenging the death of Richard II. by whom he had been promoted to the see of York. Rapin l. p. 498.

good, he desired to be acquainted with their designs. The confederates imagining that his loyalty was already shaken, returned a favourable answer. A negotiation commenced; and the earl of Westmoreland, pretending an inclination to join them, acted his part with so profound a dissimulation, as to allure the archbishop and the earl marshal to an interview, where, by his dexterous management, these two chiefs of the rebellion were seized and conducted to the royal army. This transaction threw the rebels into such consternation, that the earl of Northumberland was deserted by his troops, and obliged to fly for refuge to Berwick, of which place he was governor. Henry coming soon after to Pontefract, the archbishop and the earl marshal were condemned to death, and publicly beheaded. The archbishop suffered with great fortitude, and was honoured by the people as a martyr, till the king, by his authority, put a stop to their superstition. From Pontefract the king went to York, and punished the inhabitants with the loss of their municipal privileges. Advancing further north, he took prisoners the lords Hastings and Fawconbridge, who met with the same fate as the archbishop and the earl marshal. On his approach, the earl of Nor-

thumberland and lord Bardolph fled into Scotland. And Henry, after making himself master of Berwick, returned to London.

The king, however, was not without apprehensions of sooner or later losing his crown. He could not be easy while the earl of Northumberland, whose interest was so powerful in the north, enjoyed an asylum in Scotland. He therefore endeavoured by a secret negotiation to get that nobleman and lord Bardolph into his hands. For this purpose he made an offer to several Scotch lords, whose relatives and friends were prisoners in England, to release them without ransom, on condition that they should deliver up his two rebel subjects. The proposal was gladly received; but the earl of Northumberland and lord Bardolph being apprized of the business, retired into Wales, and placed themselves under the protection of Owen Glendour.

From that period the two English fugitives were employed jointly with Glendour, in forming projects for dethroning Henry. The Welsh made great preparations, and strengthened their army with numbers of French and Flemish adventurers, who were allured by the promise of great booty in England. The earl of Northumberland, at the same time, had secured the assistance of the people in

the north ; and as soon as matters were ripe, he and Bardolph returned privately to Scotland, from whence they entered England at the head of some Scotch troops, levied with the connivance of the duke of Albany, regent of the kingdom. On their appearance in Northumberland, where the people were already gained, such numbers flocked to their standard, that their army soon became considerable.

The king not being prepared to repel this sudden and unexpected attack, the earl of Northumberland retook several of his castles, and advanced into Yorkshire, as the possession of that county was necessary to enable him to form a junction with the Welsh. In the mean while Sir Thomas Rokeby, sheriff of York, had levied some troops to oppose the progress of the rebels. The earl of Northumberland thinking it to be of the utmost importance to disperse this body before it could receive reinforcements, marched to the attack, and flattered himself with the hope of an easy victory. But the event proved contrary to his expectation. The sheriff, not-

February 19,
A. D. 1408. withstanding the inferiority of his force, totally defeated the rebels. The earl of Northumberland was killed in the battle, and lord Bardolph being made prisoner,

died soon after of his wounds. Their heads were sent to the king, and placed upon London bridge. Several others were executed at York, and some were suffered to redeem their lives with money. Thus fell that restless baron the earl of Northumberland, who had been the chief instrument in placing Henry on the throne; but whose repeated revolts embittered the reign of that monarch, and terminated in his own destruction.

After the suppression of this rebellion, the revolt of the Welsh subsided by degrees. The people deserted their leader and submitted to Henry. The affairs of Wales were finally settled by a general pardon, which
December 32,
A. D. 1411. the king granted to all his subjects except Owen Glendour, and those who still adhered to his cause.* This celebrated chief found means to avoid the vengeance of his enemies: he passed the residue of his days in some concealed retreat, and the time of his death is unknown.

During the time that Henry reigned, England cannot be said to have been either at war or at peace with France. The truce of twenty-eight years, which Richard II. concluded with Charles VI. was alternately infringed and

* Rym. Fœd. Tom. 8. p. 711.

renewed. On every occasion the French supported the Welsh in their revolt, and several vassals of the crown of France, as the dukes of Burgundy, Orleans, and others not only attacked, at different times, the dominions of Henry, but even insulted his person. The duke of Orleans in particular sent him a challenge to fight in single combat, branding him with the opprobrious names of traitor, usurper, and regicide, to which he replied by charging the duke with sorcery. It would be an endless task to enumerate all the negotiations and trifling expeditions of those times, in which the French and the English nations were almost constantly engaged in a kind of predatory warfare without the consent or at least the command of their sovereigns. But these petty and unimportant transactions, which could not effect any alteration or transfer of power, nor serve to display political or military talents, scarcely merit a place in the chronicles of a kingdom. The weak and disorderly government of Charles VI. who laboured under a kind of mental derangement, was neither calculated for maintaining peace nor for carrying on war; and Henry carefully avoided foreign hostilities in order to be always prepared for the suppression of domestic revolt, a demon

by which his reign was perpetually infested. For this reason he saw it necessary to overlook the insults of the French rather than engage in a war, which might furnish the malecontents of his kingdom with the opportunity of executing their designs. Henry, indeed, seems to have always dreaded some mischief from France, till the troubles which agitated that kingdom, and the mutual animosity of the two great factions of Orleans and Burgundy, delivered him from his apprehensions.

A. D. 1412.

Having now surmounted all his difficulties, he enjoyed a profound tranquillity, such as he had not before experienced since his accession. The Welsh were brought to submission: the Scots were desirous of continuing the truce: he had nothing to fear from France; and the principal malecontents of his kingdom had perished in the field or on the scaffold. During this calm the king endeavoured to efface the impressions which his severity had made on the minds of the people, by affecting a sincere regard for their welfare. But while he thus laboured to retrieve his reputation, his son, the prince of Wales, was by his debauchery incurring the public aversion. He was constantly surrounded by profligates, who allured him into the most riotous and

extravagant excesses. The king was extremely mortified at the degeneracy of a son, who had already exhibited proofs of noble and manly qualities, which he now seemed to renounce; and the whole nation observing the licentious conduct of a prince who was one day to sit on the throne, could not fail of dreading the consequences. In the midst of his excesses, however, the nobleness of his heart seemed, at intervals, to emerge from the gulph in which it was plunged. One of his domestics being tried for a misdemeanor and condemned, although he had used all his interest in his favour, the prince was so exasperated that he struck the judge on the bench. This magistrate, whose name was Sir W. Gascoigne, behaving with a dignity becoming his office, ordered the prince to be instantly seized and committed to prison. The prince at the same time repenting of this intemperate sally of passion, quietly submitted to the order of the judge, and suffered himself to be conducted to prison without offering any resistance.* The courage of the judge and the moderation of the prince were equally pleasing to the king; and from this time the nation began to indulge a hope that

* Stowe's Ann. p. 342.

the native virtues of the heir apparent would, in time, rise superior to the effects of flattery and ill example.

A. D. 1413.

The next year, Henry was attacked by a distemper which, in three months, brought him to his end. But not imagining that his dissolution was so near, he resolved to undertake a croisade for the deliverance of Jerusalem from the power of the Mahommedans, and was beginning to make preparations for that expedition, when his increasing disease obliged him to think of a journey of greater importance. He had lived in constant apprehension of being dethroned, and as his constitution decayed, his fear of losing the crown increased even to a childish anxiety. Every time that he lay down to sleep, he caused the royal diadem to be placed under his pillow, lest it should be seized before he was dead. One day being in so violent a paroxysm, that he was supposed to have resigned his last breath, the prince of Wales took the crown and carried it away. The king, on recovering his senses, immediately missed it, and being informed that the prince, his son, had taken it away, asked him if he designed to rob him of his dignity before his death. The prince replied, that he had never any such intention; but that believing him to

be dead, he had taken the crown as his lawful inheritance, adding, that as he was yet alive, he restored it with much greater pleasure, and besought the Almighty to grant him many happy days to enjoy it in peace. He then replaced the crown on the pillow and received his father's blessing.

The king being seized with a violent fit while he was at his devotions before the shrine of St. Edward, in Westminster Abbey, was carried to the lodgings of the abbot, and placed in a chamber called Jerusalem. On recovering his senses and speech, he inquired where he was: on being told the name of the chamber, he called to mind a prediction which said that he should die in Jerusalem, and, concluding that its fulfilment was at hand, he began immediately to prepare for his approaching dissolution. Before he expired he sent for the prince of Wales, and gave him some excellent instructions, among which he could not forbear shewing some doubts concerning his right to the throne. The prince answered that being his lawful heir, he should endeavour to keep the crown by the same methods that he had used for preserving it during his life. The king said nothing more except that he recommended him to the protection of heaven, and a few moments after

March 20, expired, in the forty-sixth year of
A. D. 1413. his age, and the fourteenth of a
troublesome reign.

The most distinguished qualities that appear in the character of Henry IV. are the prudence and vigour by which he preserved a crown acquired in a way not universally approved. On several occasions, but particularly at the battle of Shrewsbury, he exhibited indisputable proofs of valour and martial abilities. If he suffered many insults from foreigners without shewing a proper resentment, his conduct, in this respect, may be justly attributed to his critical situation, constantly exposed to the malevolence of domestic enemies. Indeed he employed all his thoughts on the means of preserving his crown, and avoiding every measure by which it might be endangered. This was the main-spring of all his actions and the source of all his virtues and vices. His seizure of the crown being sanctioned by the parliament can scarcely be called an usurpation ; but the death of his predecessor, Richard II. is an indelible stain on his memory.

The history of this reign shews that a very great change had taken place in the balance of power, between the crown and the aristocracy, since the times of Henry III. Pre-

vions to the accession of Edward I. the barons were often taken in open rebellion, and generally pardoned. But in the reign of Henry IV. rebels, how high soever their rank, if taken, were doomed to suffer the utmost severity of the law, a circumstance which shews how much the baronial power had sunk in the course of little more than a century. This revolution of power, however, was natural, and its causes are obvious. As the people had begun to share the government with the nobles, the king was fixed on to hold the balance between the aristocratical and popular powers; and both parties, through their jealousy of each other, concurred to aggrandize his authority. In many respects this reign was beneficial to England. The government assumed a form of greater regularity and liberty than it had formerly possessed, justice was administered with greater impartiality, and the distinction between the nobility and the people daily diminished.

But if the reign of Henry IV. was favourable to the civil rights of his subjects it was an inauspicious period to their religious liberties. The influence of the church and the veneration in which it was held by the people was no longer the same as it had been

some centuries ago. In England especially religious ideas had undergone a considerable alteration. During the reign of Edward III. the doctrines of Wickliffe had been greatly diffused, and the support of the duke of Lancaster had contributed to render them respectable. They were still more disseminated in the reign of Richard II. and that prince, in conjunction with the clergy, took some ineffectual measures for their suppression by the imprisonment of their professors. But as the penalty proved insufficient to check the pretended evil, no sooner was Henry IV. on the throne than the clergy rung the alarm that the church was in danger, the constant cry of religious bigotry and interested policy. Henry desirous of gaining the affections of the ecclesiastics, readily adopted their favourite maxim, that nothing but temporal flames could save heretics from eternal damnation. He earnestly recommended to his parliament the extirpation of heresy, and although the Commons were averse to persecution, the credit of the court and the cabals of the clergy obtained an act which condemned to the flames all obstinate dissenters. But the popular veneration for the church was greatly diminished, and the vices of the ecclesiastics had drawn upon them

the public contempt. The Commons repeatedly petitioned the king to lessen the revenues of the church, which were considered as excessive, and attempted to procure a repeal of the statute against heresy.* But their influence was overbalanced by that of the royal bigot and the clergy: The sanguinary law was carried into rigorous execution; and Henry IV. is infamously distinguished in history as the first English monarch that burned the bodies of his subjects for the benefit of their souls.

* Speed, p. 619. Rapin 1. p. 500.

HENRY V.



HENRY IV. had lived unbeloved and he died unlamented. The clergy alone regretted his death, as under his government they had always found protection and favour. But the whole nation testified its joy at the accession of his son, who although his reputation had suffered by the extravagances of his youth, had, on many occasions, given such proofs of a noble and generous mind as encouraged his subjects to expect a reformation in his conduct.

The hopes of the public were not disappointed. Henry V. was crowned amidst the acclamations of the people; and ^{April 9,} _{A. D. 1413.} his first measures exhibited a proof that he had adopted maxims very different from those which he had seemed to entertain before his accession. Calling before him his former companions, he exhorted them to leave off their dissolute course of life, and dismissing them with liberal presents, commanded them not to come near the court until their conduct evinced a thorough re-

formation. In the next place he chose for his council persons of known abilities and reputation. He appointed judges who, to a knowledge of the law, united an unimpeachable integrity, and extended the same care to the choice of inferior magistrates.

Having thus given proofs of his wisdom, the young king was desirous of displaying his zeal for religion. Here the bigotry of the age and the attention of the clergy to their temporal interests exerted their malignant influence. The piety of these times had degenerated into superstition and cruelty; and the persecution of heretics was considered as the best proof of a desire to promote the glory of God. Henry's condescension to the clergy induced him to carry into strict execution the rigorous laws enacted against the Lollards, or followers of Wickliffe; and he forbade any of his subjects to attend at their preachings under the penalty of imprisonment and confiscation of property. Among those who fell martyrs, to what they considered as the cause of truth, was Sir John Oldcastle, baron of Cobham, who was esteemed the most considerable person of the sect, being the king's domestic and standing high in his favour. The king himself undertook his conversion, but finding him immoveable he commanded,

or at least permitted, the archbishop of Canterbury to bring him to trial, in the persuasion that nothing but fire and faggot could save the soul of a heretic. Oldcastle being summoned to appear before the ecclesiastical court, slighted the citation; and the king ordered him to be apprehended and committed to the Tower. On being brought before the archbishop, and refusing to recant, he was pronounced an incorrigible heretic, and delivered over to the secular power. His execution would have immediately followed his sentence, if by the help of his friends or the carelessness of his guards he had not found means to escape. Having concealed himself for some time in Wales, he was taken about four years afterwards and conducted to London, where he was executed in the most barbarous manner, being hung up by the middle and roasted against a fire.* Never did the cruelty of man invent, nor the greatest crimes draw down on the head of any delinquent a more dreadful punishment than this nobleman was made to suffer, for making use of his own understanding in regard to the concerns of his soul, instead of being guided by the authority of the church and the creeds and councils of former days.

* He was executed in the year 1417.

The great affair of Henry's reign, and that which has given a distinguished lustre to his memory, was his expedition to France. That kingdom had long been agitated by desperate factions. Charles VI. whose intellectual derangement has already been mentioned, was, by the frequent returns of his disorder, rendered for a great part of his time incapable of superintending the business of government; and during his fits of insanity, the ambition of his vassals and courtiers had room for exertion. So early as the year 1400, the houses of Orleans and Burgundy began their contests for the administration. On the 23d November, 1407, the duke of Orleans was assassinated in the streets of Paris by order of the duke of Burgundy, who had seized the reins of government. He left three sons to revenge his death and revive his party. The Dauphin, a youth of licentious morals, and without experience, was advised to claim the regency during his father's indisposition. In this view he found means to seize the Bastile, of which he was soon dispossessed by the partisans of his father-in-law, the duke of Burgundy, and was kept confined in the hotel of St. Paul. Finding himself thus checked by the Parisians, and his interest overpowered by that of the duke of Bur-

gundy, he called in the aid of the Orleans faction, at the head of which were the dukes of Orleans, Berry, Bourbon, and Alençon. The duke of Burgundy, dreading the efforts of so powerful a party, began to think of securing, in case of need, the assistance of England, and sent, as earl of Flanders, an embassy to London, under the pretext of renewing a treaty of commerce between the Flemings and the English; but, in fact, to negotiate a political alliance.

This convulsed state of affairs in France presented to Henry a favourable opportunity for reviving the claims of Edward III. to the crown of that kingdom, or at least of recovering the provinces which England had lost since the peace of Bretigny. He endeavoured at the first to accomplish his aim by negotiation. His ambassadors opened the business by demanding the whole kingdom of France for their master, as heir of Edward III. But they immediately lowered their demands to the possession of Normandy, Anjou, Maine, Touraine, and Guienne, of all the territory ceded to England by the treaty of Bretigny, all the country possessed by France between the Somme and Gravelines, to hold in full sovereignty; and they also demanded for Henry the right of sovereignty

over the earldom of Flanders and the duchy of Bretagne.

These negotiations consumed much time without producing any effect. In the meanwhile the factions of the French court continued to display their mutual animosity: each of these, as they chanced to prevail, branded the others with the names of rebels and traitors, and the gibbets were at once hung with the bodies of the accusers and the accused. While such was the state of France, Henry resolved to take advantage of the divisions which agitated that kingdom; and the jealousies which subsisted between the clergy and laity in England, contributed in no small degree to promote his designs.

During the last reign the Commons had, as already observed, ineffectually attempted to diminish the ecclesiastical revenues. The clergy artfully confounding their own interests with the cause of religion, had intimated to the king that such a proposal could proceed only from heretics, and branded the members of the House of Commons with that opprobrious name. This representation induced Henry IV. who imagined that religion itself must stand or fall with the prosperity of the clergy, to oppose the measure with all his authority; and the influence of the court

was so powerful as to occasion its failure. The diminution of the wealth of the church continued to be a favourite object with the people; and at the period now under consideration, a redoubled energy was displayed for its attainment. The parliament undertook the affair with alacrity; and in order to avoid the imputation of heresy, began with reviving and even increasing the statutes enacted against the Wickliffites, and all other dissenters from the established church. An act was passed by the two houses, that all the magistrates of the kingdom, from the lord chancellor down to the meanest officer, should bind themselves by an oath, to use their utmost exertions to extirpate heresy. By another statute it was enacted, that all persons who should read the scriptures in English, should forfeit their lands and goods, and be hanged and burned as heretics, enemies to the crown, and traitors to the kingdom, and that they should not have the benefit of any sanctuary.* Thus a christian, who worshipped his Maker according to the dictates of his understanding and conscience, when these happened to disagree with the doctrines of the established church,

* Vide authorities quoted by Tladal. Notes on Rapin I. p. 509.

was more severely treated than a robber or a murderer. Those acts were no sooner passed than a rigorous persecution commenced. Several of the Lollards were burned alive, and many left the kingdom to escape the same fate.

These bloody statutes were extremely pleasing to a tyrannical clergy, who now considered their power and interests secured against the attacks of all heretical opponents: and the pulpits every where resounded the praises of the parliament. But they knew not of the mischief that was lurking. The Commons who had shewn so great zeal for the doctrines of the church, were still desirous of diminishing her possessions. They therefore presented an address to the king, representing that the temporalities of the church would suffice to maintain fifteen earls, fifteen hundred knights, and six thousand two hundred esquires, who would render personal service in the wars, and support a hundred hospitals, besides bringing the sum of twenty thousand marks per annum into the royal treasury. They also added that the different religious houses possessed temporalities sufficient to maintain fifteen thousand priests and clerks.* This project, however, which

* Tindal's notes on Rapin, l. p. 509.—Goodw. Hist. Hen. V. p. 42.
VOL 1. 2 U

tended so greatly to increase the strength of the aristocracy, shewed that the Commons were not very profound politicians.

The clergy, perceiving their ruin to be inevitable, unless they could avert the gathering storm, held various consultations on this important subject. After the acts which had been passed, they could no longer allege that the parliament was tainted with heresy. Something, however, was necessary to be done, and after many debates they came to these two resolutions: first, to dispossess the foreign monasteries of the alien priories which they held in England, and to vest them in the crown; by which measure they could make a valuable addition to the royal treasury without resigning any thing of their own:* secondly, to engage the king in a foreign war that might divert the attention of parliament from domestic affairs.

In pursuance of these designs the archbishop of Canterbury, who undertook the management of the business, represented to the king that the proposal of the parliament was, in its nature and tendency, disadvantageous to the crown, that the intended aug-

* The alien priories were those which, being appendages to foreign monasteries, their revenues went into the hands of foreign ecclesiastics, by which great sums of money were carried out of the kingdom.

mentation of the number and wealth of the barons would increase a power, which, ever since the foundation of the monarchy, had been formidable and sometimes fatal to the sovereigns, that the multiplication of hospitals would only hold out an encouragement to idleness, that the clergy, being desirous of giving an unequivocal proof of their attachment, intended to resign the alien priories to the crown, by which its revenues would be greatly augmented, as the revenues of these houses would be entirely at the king's disposal. Henry was moved by these arguments, and willingly accepted an offer which appeared to him more advantageous to the crown than the measures proposed by the parliament; and indeed his views seem in every respect to have coincided with those of the clergy.

Having carried this point, the archbishop, in order more effectually to divert the attention of the Commons from the concerns of the church, undertook to involve the nation in a war with France. He proposed the measure in full parliament, and supported it by an able and artful speech. He began with insinuating encomiums on the virtues of the king, declaring him worthy to wear not only the crown of England but that of the world. He asserted that Henry had a just claim not

only to the provinces which had formerly belonged to the English crown, but also to the whole kingdom of France as heir of Edward III. and alleged that Pepin I. and Hugh Capet had derived from females their right to the throne. Not contented with ransacking the history of France for examples to corroborate his arguments, he had recourse to the annals of the Israelites, and adduced the case of the daughters of Zelophehad to prove the *salique* law a contradiction to the laws of nature and of God.* He then reminded his auditors that the successes of Edward III. and his son, shewed that heaven had sanctioned their cause, and asserted that the premature death of the black prince and the subsequent losses of the English were only a punishment for the sins of the nation. He exhibited a contrasted view of the flourishing state of England and the anarchy which prevailed in France, and expatiated on the advantages presented by such a juncture. After exhorting the king to exercise the great talents bestowed on him by heaven, in improving an opportunity that might never more return, and to prepare, without delay,

* It has, however, been observed, that without the *salique* law Edward III. could not have had any pretensions to the crown of France.

for so just and glorious a conquest, which would render him beyond comparison the most powerful prince of Europe, he concluded by assuring him, that if he would immortalize his name by so noble an enterprise, the clergy would give him a larger subsidy than had ever been granted to any of his predecessors, adding that he did not doubt but the latter would follow the example.

Thus did this minister of the gospel of peace sound the trumpet of war, and cause nations to wallow in blood. The speech of the archbishop, who in all probability acted in concert with the king, made so general an impression, that the parliament gave its full approbation to the measure, and granted a liberal subsidy for carrying it into execution. This perfectly coincided with the views of the clergy: the bill for curtailing their revenues was no longer thought of: other affairs attracted the attention of the house: the ardour of the people seconded that of the court and the parliament; and the general cry of the kingdom was for the extirpation of heresy and the conquest of France.

The remainder of this and a great part of the following year being spent in fruitless negotiations, in which both parties only sought to gain time, Henry prepared for his

grand expedition. But when he was ready to embark at Southampton, he had notice of a conspiracy formed against him by the earl of Cambridge, Henry Scrope, lord treasurer, and Sir Thomas Grey, a knight and privy counsellor. Their object was to place the earl of March on the throne, and they are said to have been bribed by France; but whatever was their motive, they confessed their guilt, and were executed. The king having thus suppressed a conspiracy, which might have frustrated his views, nothing remained to occasion any further delay to his embarkation.

A. D. 1415. About the middle of August,

Henry set sail with a fleet of fifteen hundred transports, on board of which was embarked an army of fifty thousand men, and numbers of the nobility.* Having landed at Havre de Grace, he proceeded to Harfleur, which he took after meeting with a vigorous resistance; and having expelled the inhabitants, peopled it with a colony of English, who, on condition of removing thither with their families, had houses granted to them and their heirs.† After this success, Henry sent

* Our historians differ in regard to the precise time of the sailing of this armament; but they all agree that Henry landed in France sometime between the 14th and 22d August.

† In this he imitated the conduct of Edward III. at Calais.

a challenge to the Dauphin to terminate the dispute by single combat. But such a decision appeared to the Dauphin to be nothing less than staking a crown, of which he considered the inheritance as certain, against the precarious expectations of the king of England. History furnishes several instances of such challenges being given by princes; but unfortunately something always intervenes to prevent this mode of decision, which would spare oceans of blood.

The campaign had begun too late to promise any extensive conquests, and sickness soon rendered the English army incapable of offensive operations. A dysentery had broke out among the troops, and made such terrible ravages, that not more than a fourth part was able to bear arms. This epidemical disease affected not only the soldiers, but also the officers. The bishop of Norwich and the earl of Suffolk were already dead, and the duke of Clarence, the king's brother, the earl of Arundel, and several other nobles of distinction, were so dangerously ill, as to be obliged to return to England. The French, in the mean while, were assembling their forces, and the vast armaments which they were preparing, together with the sickly state of the English, and the advanced season of

the year, obliged Henry to think of retreating. He might, it appears, have re-embarked at Harfleur or Havre de Grace; but he resolved to retire over land to Calais, a measure for which no historian has been able to account in a satisfactory manner.

The French being apprized of his design, broke down the bridges and causeways by which he was to pass, and destroyed or removed into the fortified towns all the forage and provisions, in order to prevent the invaders from finding subsistence. At the same time, the constable D'Albret, with an advanced corps, continually harassed the retreating army. The design of Henry was to pass the ford of Blanchetaque, where it had been crossed by Edward III. on the eve of the battle of Cressy. But he found that passage rendered impracticable by sharp stakes fixed in the river, besides being defended by a strong body of troops. To advance to Calais or to retreat to Harfleur, now seemed equally dangerous. Henry, however, persisted in his first design, and resolved to march higher up the Somme in search of a passage. But as he advanced, he every where found the bridges broken down, and the fords strongly guarded by troops encamped on the opposite bank.

While the English were thus involved in difficulties, which appeared almost insurmountable, the example of their king, who endured the same hardships and wants as the meanest soldier, inspired them with patience and resolution. The constable had by this time assembled the whole force of France; and being joined by all the princes and nobles of the kingdom, except the dukes of Berry and Burgundy, he called a council of war, in which it was unanimously resolved to give battle to the English. The French generals, from a consideration of the vast superiority of their force, being confident of victory, judged it to be the most eligible plan to suffer the king of England to pass the Somme, and to post themselves on the road to Calais, expecting by this measure to render his advance to that place, and his retreat to Harfleur, equally impossible.

It must be confessed that, by crossing this river, the king of England placed himself in a dangerous situation; but had he now, instead of adopting that measure, attempted a retreat, he must have again encountered the same obstacles, which he had not surmounted without infinite difficulty. As the passages were no longer guarded, he crossed the Somme between St. Quintin and Peronne, and pro-

ceeded on his march towards Calais. The French army having taken a position directly in his route, there was no possibility of passing without hazarding a battle, which in his circumstances could afford little hope of success. His army was wasted by hunger, fatigue, and disease, and, according to some of our accounts reduced to nine thousand in number. The French and the English historians, perhaps equally influenced by national vanity, exhibit very different statements of the numbers brought into the field on this memorable occasion. According to Walsingham, the French army consisted of a hundred and forty thousand, but according to Goodwin, of a hundred and fifty thousand men, of whom fifty thousand were cavalry, and ten thousand of them lords and gentlemen. This appears to be an exaggeration. Father Daniel, one of the most creditable of the French historians, says that their forces were three times, but Mezerai says four times more numerous than the English.* These accounts, however, being examined and compared, serve to shew that the disparity was prodigious; and the French were so con-

* Wals. p. 390. Goodw. Hen. V. p. 81. Pere Daniel. Tom. 5. p. 541.

ident of victory, that they are said to have sent to demand of the king how much he intended to give for his ransom.

A. D. 1415. On the 25th October, as soon as it

was light, the two armies were drawn up in battle array near the castle of Agincourt. A narrow ground, flanked on one side by a rivulet, on the other by a wood, was to be the scene of action. But here the constable D'Albret, the French general, committed an unpardonable fault, which, in all probability, occasioned the loss of the battle. As the English were under the necessity of proceeding to Calais, the French commander had in his own power the choice of the ground, and ought to have waited for them on some plain sufficiently spacious for the evolutions of his numerous army. In such a situation, he might have surrounded his enemy; but in choosing a narrow field of battle, he lost the advantages that he might have derived from the superiority of numbers. So egregious an error could only have proceeded from his unskilfulness in military affairs, or from a blind presumption.

In this injudicious position the constable D'Albret waited the approach of the English. He divided his army into three bodies, the first of which he commanded in person, with

the dukes of Orleans and Bourbon, the counts of Eu, Vendome, and Richmont, the famous mareschal Boncicant, grand master of the cross-bow men, Dampier, admiral of France, and several other nobles of distinction. The duke of Alençon commanded the second body, having with him the duke of Bar, and the counts of Nevers, Salines, Roussi, Grand Pré, and Vandemont. The counts of Dampmartin, Fauquenbergh, and Lauroi, were at the head of the third division.

The king of England, in drawing up his army, formed only two lines, by reason of the small number of his troops. The duke of York commanded the first line, and Henry, having an imperial crown of gold on his helmet, and the standard of England displayed in front of the troops, put himself at the head of the second. In this posture he waited the attack; and riding along the front of his battalions, exhorted his troops not to fear a multitude of raw and undisciplined soldiers. He represented to them that victories depended not on numbers, but on bravery; and, above all, on the assistance of God, in whom he admonished them to place all their confidence. Perceiving that the French did not advance to the attack, Henry called his principal officers, and said, "Since

“our enemies have intercepted our way, let us break through them in the name of the Holy Trinity.” He then gave the signal for battle, and the whole army rushed forward with a shout. Coming within bow-shot of the enemy, the archers let fly a shower of arrows, which did great execution; and the foremost ranks fixed the pointed stakes, which they had prepared as a guard against the attacks of the cavalry. At the same time a corps of bowmen, who had been placed in ambuscade in a low meadow, and concealed among bushes, poured volleys of arrows on the French cavalry, which was soon thrown into disorder, as the horses sunk up to the knees, by reason of the softness of the ground. The English seeing their confusion, rushed on sword in hand, and though enfeebled by disease, they compensated by courage their deficiency in strength. The impetuosity of their attack obliged the enemy to give way, and a body of English horse which had been concealed in the wood, issuing out at the same time, flanked the French infantry. A total route of the first division of their army ensued: the constable of France was killed, with a number of distinguished officers, and most of the other princes and generals were made prisoners.

The first division of the French being routed, the duke of Alençon led on the second, hoping by his conduct and courage to give a favourable turn to the battle. Henry, on the other hand, brought up his second line, and alighting from his horse, fought on foot with a valour never surpassed by the most renowned heroes mentioned in history. The duke D'Alençon having selected eighteen of his bravest cavaliers, ordered them to charge up to the king of England, and, if possible, either to kill him or take him prisoner. Those chosen warriors resolving to carry their point, or perish in the attempt, made so impetuous a charge, that cutting their way to the king, one of them stunned him with a stroke of his battle-axe; and the others being ready to second the blow, he must in all probability have perished, had not David Gam, a valiant Welsh officer, with two others of the same nation, preserved his life by the sacrifice of their own. The king recovering his senses, and seeing those brave men extended at his feet and still breathing, conferred on them the honour of knighthood, the only reward that could then be bestowed on their courage and loyalty. The thickest of the battle being now gathered round the king's person, and his brother the duke of

Gloucester being fallen by his side, stunned with a blow, he covered him for a while, till the strokes of his assailants brought him down on his knees. His danger and his valour inspired his troops with a courage bordering on desperation. They rushed headlong on the enemy, and by this impetuous attack threw them into such disorder, that their generals could never more bring them to the charge. The duke of Alençon, who commanded the second division, on seeing it put to flight, resolved by one desperate stroke to change the fortune of the day, or perish in the attempt. With a small number of determined companions, he made a way with his sword through the English battalions, and pushing up to the king, discharged such a blow on his head, that he cleaved in two the golden crown on his helmet. Henry, in return, struck the duke to the ground, and, with repeated blows, killed two of his attendants. In an instant the duke was killed by the surrounding crowd, notwithstanding the endeavours of the king to save him from their fury. His death totally discouraged his troops, and decided the issue of the battle. The third division of the French seeing the route of the first and second lines, could not be brought to advance, but retired without

fighting, and left their flying companions exposed to the fury of their conquerors.

The king now thinking the victory certain, was surprised on receiving information that the enemy had attacked his camp. Struck with the apprehension that the French had rallied, and sensible that the number of his prisoners was greater than that of his army, he instantly ordered all, except those of the highest rank, to be massacred. This order being executed, Henry rallied his troops, and marched back against the enemies, who proved to be only a body of runaways, who retiring early from the battle, and knowing the English camp to be weakly guarded, began to plunder the baggage while the two armies were engaged; but on seeing themselves about to be attacked, they fled with precipitation. It must be considered as a matter of regret, that so glorious a victory was tarnished by the massacre of the prisoners; but their great number, and the just apprehension of the king that they might turn against him in the fight, which he thought himself about to renew, may serve to excuse this sanguinary measure.

In this memorable battle, which was so fatal to France and so glorious to England, the French lost their generalissimo the con-

stable D'Albret, the duke of Alençon, prince of the blood, the dukes of Brabant and Bar, the counts of Nevers, Vaudemont, Marlé, Roussi, and Fauquenbergh, who were all slain, as well as many other officers and nobles, and ten thousand soldiers.* Among the prisoners, who would have been very numerous, had not the massacre taken place after the battle, were the dukes of Orleans and Bourbon, the counts of Eu, Vendome, Richmond, Etonville, and mareschal Boucicaut. On the side of the English were slain the duke of York, and the earl of Suffolk, and, according to some historians, sixteen or seventeen hundred, or according to others, only four or five hundred men. But in this, as in all other cases of a similar nature, historians differ so greatly in their accounts, that there is no possibility of ascertaining the truth.†

The victory of Agincourt was gained under circumstances nearly similar to those in which were fought the battles of Cressey and Poitiers. At the battle of Cressey the victory of the English has by many historians been attributed to their cannon, with which the

* Vide Le Fev. c. 64. Goodwin Henry V. p. 91.

† Mezerni reduces the loss of the French to six thousand, and a note to the English translation of Presid. Henault states it at two thousand killed and fourteen thousand prisoners.

French were at that time unacquainted. At Poitiers and Agincourt, the defeat of the French must be chiefly ascribed to the unskilfulness and presumption of their commanders, king John and the constable D'Albret. But history scarcely mentions a more extraordinary victory than that of Agincourt, if we take into consideration not only the great disparity of force, but the different conditions of the two armies, the French strong and healthful, the English exhausted by fatigue and enfeebled by disease. It is difficult to prove that the justice of his cause could merit a particular interposition of providence; but the piety of Henry ascribed all his success to the goodness of God. He had the humility to acknowledge that he had not obtained the victory by the superiority of his merit, but because the Almighty was pleased to make him his instrument in punishing the sins of the French nation, adding, though perhaps with no great degree of sincerity, that the advantages which he might expect from this success, did not in the least diminish his inclination for peace.*

From this period the contest between England and France was carried on by nego-

ciations, plots, and treasons, rather than by force of arms. The different French factions preferring their private views to the public interest, assiduously courted the alliance of the English, instead of uniting against them. The duke of Burgundy claimed, in quality of prince of the blood, and first peer of the realm, the administration of affairs; and knowing that his claim would be ineffectual, unless supported by force, he approached Paris with his army. The Dauphin, on the contrary, called in the count D'Armagnac, the head of the Orleans faction, and gave him the constable's sword. This nobleman, the inveterate enemy of the Burgundians, spared none of that party: many were hanged, numbers were imprisoned; and the animosity of the two factions was heightened to such a degree, that nothing was capable of uniting them against the common enemy.

December 18, The death of Louis, the Dauphin,
A. D. 1415. which happened about the end of the year, left the constable master of the government and of the king's person; and he refused to admit John, the new Dauphin, to court, unless he would openly declare against the Burgundians.* The Dauphin therefore

* Hen. Ab. Chron. Rapin says he was poisoned December 24th. Henault does not mention his being poisoned.

commenced a negotiation with the duke of Burgundy, but before any thing
April 5,
A. D. 1418. could be concluded, he was poisoned at Compiègne.*

While France was one vast theatre of treasons, of private murders, and public executions, Henry, by his method of carrying on the war, shewed that his wisdom was equal to his valour. His victory at Agincourt had been more glorious than useful: he had acquired martial fame, but had not gained one foot of territory. He prudently considered that by pushing the French too vigorously, he ran the risk of uniting against him the different factions, in which case he could hope for little success in his enterprise; but by giving them some respite, he afforded them leisure to exert their strength in mutual destruction. His grand aim was to gain the duke of Burgundy, with whom he had continued his negotiations ever since the commencement of the war. The critical situation of that prince had caused him to waver in his resolutions; but at length the violence of party spirit impelled him to join the enemy of his country.

* Rapin says on the 16th April. Hecault and all the French historians agree that the second Dauphin was poisoned.

On the death of the Dauphin John, his brother Charles, afterwards Charles VII. became Dauphin and heir apparent. This young prince immediately espoused the Orleans party, and the animosity of the factions ran so high, that the duke of Burgundy resolved no longer to keep any measures with the court. He therefore concluded a treaty with Henry, and acknowledged him as the legitimate sovereign of France, promising to support him with all his forces, and to use his utmost endeavours to place him on the throne.*

At the commencement of the war, Henry knew that he should have to contend with not more than a part of the forces of France. But after the conclusion of this treaty with the duke of Burgundy, he began to think of recommencing hostilities, in the full assurance of having the half of France on his side. His principal embarrassment was the want of money. The excessive demonstrations of joy with which he was received at London, on his return after the victory of Agincourt, shew how greatly his subjects admired and esteemed a prince, who had rendered the English name so glorious. But whether the

* See the articles in Rapin 1, p. 517 and 518.

parliament began to perceive that the acquisition of France must prove ruinous to England, or whether they regarded only the present expences, the supplies granted to the king were so inadequate to the exigences of the war, that he was obliged to pawn his crown to the bishop of Winchester for a hundred thousand marks, part of his jewels to the city of London for ten thousand pounds, and the rest to different lords and gentlemen, who furnished a certain number of horsemen and infantry.*

By these means he equipped an army of twenty-five thousand men, a feeble force indeed for the conquest of France, had he not been sure of meeting in that country with much assistance and little opposition. With these forces he landed in Normandy, August 1, A. D. 1417. and reduced that province, while the duke of Burgundy presenting himself before Paris, prevented the court from taking any measures to repel the invasion. In the mean while the queen, Isabella, of Bavaria, who had hitherto been an enemy of the Burgundians, was, by the Dauphin, sent prisoner to Tours. Her disgrace was attributed to the intrigues of the constable D'Armagnac; but

* Rapin I. p. 518.

amidst these scenes of courtly corruption, it is impossible to distinguish between the innocent and the guilty. The injured or criminal mother, however, could never forgive the affront. Her resentment surmounting every other consideration, she became the declared enemy of her son, and effected a reconciliation with the duke of Burgundy, by whose assistance she escaped from Tours, and retiring to Troyes, assumed the title of regent.

While France was a prey to foreign invasion and intestine divisions, the constable D'Armagnac chose rather to see the state perish than to resign his authority. The Burgundians, however, gaining strength in Paris,

May 18th,
A. D. 1418. found means to introduce Lisle Adam, governor of Pontoise, into the city, and the whole faction taking arms, made a terrible slaughter of the Armagnacs. The constable was thrown into prison, the Dauphin, escaping from the Louvre in his shirt, fled to Melun, and the king was left in the hands of the Burgundians. This commotion was only a prelude to more horrible scenes. The exiled Burgundians returned from all quarters to Paris, and renewed the massacre. The constable was
June 12th,
A. D. 1418. murdered, and dragged through the streets; and the chancellor, several bishops,

and other persons, to the number of two thousand, suffered the same barbarous treatment. Two days after this massacre, the queen and the duke of Burgundy entered the metropolis, and having the king in their power issued, in his name, such orders as they judged to be conducive to their interests.* On the other hand the Dauphin, who had assumed the title of regent, declared all who should obey the duke of Burgundy, guilty of treason. Thus, what party soever the French should espouse, they were liable to suffer as rebels and traitors.

The duke of Burgundy now being master of the person of the king, and having the government of the kingdom in his hands, had not the same interest as before to promote the affairs of the English. Since the late revolution in his favour, his views had changed with the change of situation, and caused an ambiguity in his conduct which rendered it difficult to conjecture his designs. Henry negotiated both with the duke and the Dauphin, while several of the French nobles earnestly endeavoured to reconcile the two factions, whose animosity was ruining their country.

* In addition to the political calamities of Paris at this time, the plague broke out in that city, and in the space of three months carried off forty thousand persons. Râpin I. p. 520.

At length, in spite of all the intrigues of Henry, this reconciliation took place, which, if sincere, must have frustrated all his expectations in France. In a war of six years his acquisitions had been confined to Normandy, although he had constantly been openly or secretly favoured by one of the factions, and their union was certainly sufficient to extinguish his hopes of conquering the whole kingdom. But the vindictive animosity of party spirit, by which France had so long been divided and agitated, revived with all its former violence, and gave a favourable and unexpected turn to his affairs. The duke of Burgundy was murdered at an interview with the Dauphin on the bridge of August 11th, A. D. 1419. Montereau, where they had met to determine on a plan for carrying on the war against the English. His son and successor resolving to revenge his death, entered into a league with the king of England, and queen Isabella, the mortal enemy of the Dauphin her son. After a series of negotiations a treaty was concluded at Troyes.* Catherine, the daughter of Charles VI. was given in marriage to the king of England, who was declared regent of France

* The treaty of Troyes was signed on the 9th May, A. D. 1420.

during the life of Charles, and successor to the crown at his decease. Things being thus adjusted Henry entered Paris without opposition, and assumed the administration in the name of Charles VI. A bed of justice being

soon after held, all the persons concerned in the murder of John the Fearless, late duke of Burgundy, were declared guilty of high treason, and of course incapable of any succession, a sentence in which the Dauphin, although neither he nor his accomplices were mentioned by name, was evidently implicated.

Henry having successfully settled his affairs in France, returned to England with his queen, who was crowned on the 14th February, and a parliament was summoned to meet on the 2d of May at Leicester.* This parliament granted the king a subsidy for prosecuting the war against the Dauphin, but at the same time presented a remonstrance intimating that the conquest of France must be ruinous to England. From this it appears that the English began to be cured of the infatuation by which they had

* The king laid before this parliament a statement of the revenues and expences of the crown; in which it appears that the revenue amounted to no more than £55,743. or £167,229. of modern money. Rapin l. p. 527, on the authority of the public acts.

been misled since the reign of Edward III. and to form a just estimate of an acquisition which, how splendid soever it might appear, and however it might increase the glory and power of the monarch, tended to transfer the seat of empire from London to Paris, and to render England no more than an appendage to France.

Henry having raised a new army of about twenty-eight thousand men, for the payment of which, as the parliamentary supplies were insufficient, he was forced to borrow money of opulent individuals. Having landed at Calais, the Dauphin, who was before Chartres, retired at his approach. During the remainder of this year and the beginning of the next, the arms of Henry were occupied by the sieges of Dreux and Meaux. After these transactions, Henry, with his queen, went to Paris, and was lodged in the Louvre. On

A. D. 1422. Whitsunday the two kings and two queens, with their crowns on their heads, dined together in public. But while Henry commanded with absolute authority in Paris, he received advice that the Dauphin had made himself master of some places on the Loire. On this intelligence he prepared to take the field, and had already begun his march when he was taken ill of a dysen-

tery.* Finding himself unable to head his army, he returned to Vincennes, where he expired, in the thirty-fourth year of his age, and the tenth of his reign, displaying, in his last moments, the same intrepidity that had marked his character in every transaction of his life.

August 31st.
A. D. 1422.

Henry V. has by several historians been ranked with the greatest of heroes; but the battle of Agincourt was his only martial exploit that could be a just subject of panegyric; and in that celebrated action he displayed the valour of a soldier more than the skilfulness of a general. His undertaking to retire overland to Calais, when he might, without danger, have reimbarked at Harfleur, and rashly to force his way in spite of the efforts of an army so greatly superior, was an error which might have proved fatal, had not the French commander committed another of equal or greater magnitude in the choice of his ground at Agincourt. If, however, his military skill affords no ground for applause, his intrepidity and valour claim the admiration of posterity; and his prudent management of the French factions is a proof

* The contradictory accounts of historians have left it uncertain whether his sickness was dysentery, a fistula, or a pleurisy. Vide authorities quoted by Tindal in Note on Rapin, vol. 1. p. 529.

of his political abilities. His warlike achievements must be considered as inferior to those of Edward III. That prince had to contend with all France united against him. Henry was opposed only by a part of the kingdom. Henry conquered France not by arms but by negotiations. It was to his good fortune and the Burgundian faction that he was indebted for the splendid acquisition.

The reign of Henry V. was glorious rather than beneficial to England. His attachment to the clergy led him to bigotry and intolerance, and his sanguinary persecution of all who were branded with the name of heretics was a grievous oppression of his subjects, and a horrid violation of the rights of humanity. The successful termination of his war with France cast a lustre on his reign; but it was the source of future disgrace and calamities; and although he died in the midst of glory the baleful consequences of his triumphs were fatally experienced by his successor.

HENRY VI.

HENRY VI. was an infant of nine months old when he succeeded to the throne of his father, and within less than six months after his accession, the death of Charles VI. devolved upon him the crown of France. Immediately after the decease of that prince, the duke of Bedford, whom Henry V. had, by his last will, constituted regent of France, assembled at Paris all the French lords of the English party, and exhorted them to recognize his nephew, the young Henry, for their sovereign. Accordingly the infant monarch of England was proclaimed king of France; and the regent, the council, and the city of Paris, sent deputies to London to congratulate him on his accession to the thrones of the two kingdoms.

The next care of the duke of Bedford was to renew the alliance with the duke of Burgundy, and to take every measure that seemed necessary for securing the throne of his nephew. The Dauphin, in the mean while, was, with equal activity, preparing to recover a crown of which he had been

deprived by a concurrence of calamitous circumstances. On the day after receiving intelligence of the death of his father, he was proclaimed king of France with all the solemnity that the circumstances of his court would permit, and soon after was crowned at Poitiers, the city of Rheims, the place where that ceremony was usually performed, being then in the hands of the English. France thus beheld the baleful phenomenon of two kings and two courts, with hostile armies contending for her dubious sceptre, and desolating her finest provinces. Henry was master of Paris, and of most of the country as far that metropolis. Charles, the Dauphin, had the uncontrolled possession of the southern parts of the kingdom, except Guienne, which was in the hands of the English: the middle part might be considered as a doubtful territory; and many of the provinces were divided between the two contending princes, each of whom had his fortified towns and his garrisons in the neighbourhood of those of his enemy. But Henry had greatly the advantage over his rival; for besides his possessions in France, his cause was supported by the whole kingdom of England; and he could rely on the forces of Burgundy, Flanders, and Artois, which belonged to the duke of

Burgundy, his vassal and ally. His feeble age was amply compensated by the political and military talents of two uncles, the dukes of Bedford and Gloucester, the former of whom had, according to the last directions of the late king, taken the administration of affairs in France, and the latter in England. The duke of Bedford had under his orders those celebrated English generals the duke of Somerset, the earls of Warwick, Salisbury, and Arundel, the brave Talbot, afterwards Earl of Shrewsbury, and several others whose names are famous in the histories of those days. Charles, the Dauphin, who had assumed the name of Charles VII. was much more addicted to licentious gallantry and idle diversions than to politics or war; and although he was not destitute of the courage of a soldier, he had none of the qualifications of a general.* But as fortune had raised up against him formidable enemies, she had given him prudent counsellors and valiant commanders, who were the actors in those great scenes, of which he was little more than a spectator, and who, almost without any efforts of his, placed him on the throne of his ancestors.

* See his character in *Presid. Henault. Ab. Chron. Ad. An.*

Such was the state of affairs in France at the accession of the two rival kings. The war was carried on with all the vigour that the means of the two parties would allow; but France was weakened by discord and exhausted by war, and England was considerably drained of men and money by sending fresh levies and maintaining numerous garrisons. But although the English parliament had, as already observed, begun to perceive the probable and indeed almost unavoidable consequences of the union of the two monarchies, the glare of victory and conquest always dazzles the people; and the nation, as well as the court, was unwilling to lose so splendid an acquisition as France. But as almost every town in that kingdom was fortified and garrisoned by one of the contending parties, the armies brought into the field were far from being numerous. The troops on both sides were, for the most part, dispersed in garrisons, and the operations of the war consisted chiefly in sieges, surprises, and skirmishes.* In the actions of Crevant and Vernueil, the first of which was fought in 1423, and the latter in the following year, the

* From Chapin, vol. 1 book 12th. P. Daniel tom. 6. and the other French and English historians, it does not appear that any of the armies brought into the field much exceeded twenty thousand men.

English were victorious; but during this dull period we meet with no great, or splendid achievements to embellish the pages of history.

A. D. 1428. The siege of Orleans was the great and decisive event of this war; and the circumstances by which it was attended has rendered it memorable to posterity and interesting to philosophers of all ages and nations, by exhibiting, in so striking a manner, the power of opinion. This important siege was begun by the earl of Salisbury with an army of about sixteen thousand men. His force being not sufficiently numerous for forming a complete investment, he surrounded the city with sixty forts or redoubts. Six of the strongest of these redoubts commanded the principal avenues to the city, and upon these, batteries and forts were erected, in order to prevent the entrance of supplies into the place, and to shelter his troops. Notwithstanding, however, these precautions, convoys frequently found means to enter the city, though chiefly by dint of the sword. About the end of December the garrison amounted to about three thousand men, while, by the frequent supplies sent from Paris by the regent, the army of the besiegers was increased to twenty-three thousand. The siege was vigorously prosecuted during the whole

winter amidst almost continual attacks, sallies, and skirmishes. The earl of Salisbury was killed by a cannon shot, at the attack of a tower situated on the bridge ; but his death did not interrupt the progress of the siege. The earl of Suffolk took the command of the English army, and being assisted by Sir John Talbot, one of the most accomplished generals of the age, carried on the operations with unabated vigour.

Charles, in the mean while, was sensible of the consequences that must follow the loss of Orleans, but having neither men nor money to carry on the war, he began to think of retiring into Dauphiny, and leaving the besieged city to its fate. His affairs, indeed, seemed desperate; and the English expected, in two or three campaigns, to be completely masters of every part of France. At this critical juncture the scale was suddenly turned; and an obscure individual became the instrument of one of the most extraordinary revolutions recorded in history. A servant maid, named Joan D'Arc, a native of the village of Domremi, near Vaucouleurs, in Lorrain, imagined herself to be commissioned by heaven to remove the calamities of her country, and to restore the king to the throne of his ancestors. This enthusiast being sent

to Charles, who was then with his court at Chinon, was deemed a fit instrument to revive the spirits of his adherents, who were dismayed at so many losses and misfortunes: at least, when affairs seemed desperate, nothing could be lost by trying the expedient. She promised the king to deliver the city of Orleans, and to see him crowned at Rheims: to these two points she asserted that her mission extended. The courtiers and generals took every measure to diffuse an opinion that she acted under the impulse of divine inspiration. To confirm this belief, and render her more remarkable, a sword was, at her request, brought from the tomb of a knight in the church of St. Catherine, at Ferbois. Equipped in man's apparel and in complete armour, she put herself at the head of a convoy designed for Orleans. The count de Dunois, at the same time, making a desperate sally, the English were defeated. The convoy was then introduced into Orleans, and Joan entered the city, accompanied by the generals, amidst the acclamations of the people.

This success was attributed to the heavenly inspired maid: her enthusiasm animated the troops: the generals took advantage of this impression, and without engaging in any

rash measure, at the very time when she acted under their direction, they appeared to be led by her example. In four successive assaults she carried four of the principal forts which the besiegers had thrown up round the city. In the last of these attacks, although wounded both in the neck and the shoulder, she continued to animate the troops by exhortation and example; and on every occasion displayed a courage and valour not to have been expected from her sex. The English having lost near 6000 men in these different actions, besides being dispossessed of their principal forts, were obliged to raise the siege, after having consumed seven months before the place.

The raising of the siege of Orleans ushered in the decline of the English affairs. The whole French army did not exceed six thousand in number, yet this inconsiderable force fearlessly pursued the English, who, although much superior in strength, fled from before the inauspicious walls in the greatest disorder.* Their consternation was indescribable, and could only be equalled by the

* M. Le Pres. Henault says the siege of Orleans was raised on the 6th of May. Rapin says on the 12th.

ardour instilled into their enemies, to whom the fortified towns surrendered with an astonishing rapidity, and many of them without making any resistance. Never were the effects of superstitious credulity more conspicuous. That the Maid of Orleans was an instrument of supernatural agency was equally believed by both nations; but while the French were fully persuaded of her divine mission, the English ascribed her successes to diabolical powers: the former, therefore, were fired with military enthusiasm, the latter were struck with an inexpressible terror.

The maid having fulfilled the first part of her promise, now prepared to complete her work, by conducting Charles to be crowned at Rheims, the usual place of the inauguration of the French monarchs. That city was in the hands of the English; and Charles had a hundred and twenty miles to march through a country filled with their garrisons. But the presence of Joan inspired the troops with the same enthusiastic ardour by which she was actuated; and every obstacle speedily vanished. The English troops were defeated at Palay, and Sir John Talbot, their general, was made prisoner: their garrisons surrendered at the first summons; and the duke of Bedford was obliged to keep within the walls

of Paris. Charles saw the number of his adherents increase with his prosperity; and his army was soon augmented to 15,000 men. Having detached 5000 to Normandy and Guienne, he proceeded with the remaining 10,000 towards Rheims. Auxerre, Troyes, Châlons, Soissons, Compiègne, &c. were abandoned by the enemy at his approach. The inhabitants of Rheims having expelled the English garrison, Charles entered the city in triumph,

July 7th,
A. D. 1429.

and was crowned with the usual solemnity amidst the acclamations of the people.* After the ceremony was performed, the Maid of Orleans, declaring her mission fulfilled, applied for leave to retire; but by the persuasion of the king she consented to remain in his service. This determination proved fatal to the heroine. Having imprudently shut herself up in Compiègne, the English laid siege to that place; and she was taken prisoner in making a sally. Policy, superstition, and vengeance, concurred to promote her destruction. All France believed that she was sent from God: the English believed that, in fighting against her, they had to contend with the devil. The policy of the duke of Bedford was concerned to remove

* P. Daniel, *Tom.* 6. p. 71. *Pres. Henrich. Ab. Chron.* ad An. 1429.

impressions which converted the English into cowards and rendered the French invincible. The measures which he took for this purpose have disgraced his name in the eyes of an enlightened posterity, but they were perfectly in unison with the superstitious spirit of that age. By his order she was tried before an ecclesiastical court, devoted to the English interest, and being condemned as a heretic and a sorceress, was burned alive in the market-place at Rouen, pursuant to

May 30th,
A. D. 1431. her sentence.

Thus perished the celebrated Maid of Orleans, whose name will for ever be commemorated in the histories of France and England. The cruel sacrifice, which was not less disgraceful than the victories of Cressy, Poitiers, and Agincourt, had been glorious to the English name and nation, somewhat interrupted; but did not turn the tide of success which had begun to flow in favour of Charles. In order to restore the declining affairs of the English in France, Henry VI. went to Paris, and was solemnly crowned in the church of Notre Dame. This spectacle was intended to animate his adherents; but the cause was irrecoverably lost. The war, however, was continued during a series of years, with

Dec. 17,
A. D. 1431.

various success; but the general result of its operations was disadvantageous to the English. In the year 1435, their cause received a mortal blow by the defection of the duke of Burgundy, who abandoned the alliance of England, and went over to the party of Charles, and another scarcely less fatal by the death of the duke of Bedford, who was succeeded in the regency by Richard, duke of York. In the following year, Charles

became master of Paris. The sinking cause of the English was long supported by the valour of their soldiers and the skill of their generals, especially the celebrated Talbot, then earl of Shrewsbury. But that able commander was killed; together with his son, at the battle of Castillon. After his death the French made themselves

masters of the whole province of Guienne, with Bourdeaux, its capital. Thus the English were entirely expelled from every part of France, except the single city of Calais, the only remaining monument of their former victories. Their long wars and numerous conquests in that country had only served to deluge its soil with their own blood, and with that of its slaughtered inhabitants.

While these transactions were taking place in France, the court of England was a theatre

of intrigues, being agitated by factions, the leaders of which made a pretended zeal for the public good a veil for their private ambition. The duke of Gloucester and the cardinal of Winchester had long disputed the administration during Henry's minority. As the king advanced in age, the credit of the duke, his uncle, sensibly declined, and that of the cardinal daily increased. No positive crime could be laid to the charge of the duke; but the duchess, his consort, was accused of witchcraft and high treason. In those dark ages such accusations were not uncommon. It was pretended that she had frequent conferences with Roger Bolingbroke, a priest and reputed necromancer, and Margery Gurdeman, a witch, and that, by their assistance, she had made a figure of the king in wax, which being placed before a gentle fire, in proportion as it melted, the king's strength was to waste, and on its entire dissolution his life was to terminate.* Bolingbroke denied the whole charge; but the duchess confessed that she had employed the woman to make a filtre to secure the affections of her husband, whose fidelity she sometimes

* This was a mode of witchcraft commonly practised in those days, of which frequent instances are met with in the histories of both France and England.

suspected. Though this confession did not prove her guilty of the crimes laid to her charge, yet the enemies of the duke had so taken their measures, that neither innocence nor rank could protect either her or her pretended accomplices. The priest, though not convicted of any crime, was hanged and quartered, the woman was burnt in Smithfield, and the duchess being obliged to do public penance for three several days at St. Paul's, was condemned to perpetual imprisonment.*

During these contests among the ministers, Henry was at first, from his tender age, incapable of conducting the affairs of government; and as he advanced in years, he shewed himself equally incapable, from ignorance and imbecility. The earl of Suffolk, one of the king's favourites, desirous of raising up a new power in opposition to that of the duke of Gloucester, advised him to espouse Margaret of Anjou, daughter of Rene, king of Sicily. She was a princess of great penetration, and uncommon resolution; but totally destitute of the gifts of fortune. The duke of Gloucester opposed the marriage, but [without being able to prevent its taking

*-Vide Hall. p. 146. Stowe's An. p. 381, &c.

place. Soon after her arrival in England, she began to govern the king with an absolute sway, and formed a strict union with the earl, now created marquis of Suffolk, the cardinal bishop of Winchester, and others of that party, in order to effect the ruin of the duke of Gloucester, whom they regarded as their common enemy, and whose resentment they dreaded if ever he should ascend the throne, to which he was the presumptive heir, in case that the king should die without issue.

His destruction was a matter of some difficulty. It was impossible to put him to death by the usual course of justice, as they could not convict him of any crime, and as he was the favourite of the nation, they knew it would be dangerous to murder him in public. His enemies therefore took a surer method. They caused him to be apprehended on a charge of forming a conspiracy to kill the king, and to seize the crown. A commotion was immediately raised in the city, but was soon appeased. The people were universally persuaded of his innocence, and did not doubt that he would make it appear upon trial before his peers. But he was not allowed either time or opportunity to make his defence. On the morning appointed for

the investigation, he was found dead in his bed, without any external marks of violence on his body, which, in order to prevent suspicion, was shewn to both houses of parliament, and afterwards exposed to the view of the public.* These precautions of the court were far from convincing the people. The whole nation believed that he was murdered; and this outrage committed on a prince so universally beloved and esteemed, excited against the queen and the ministers a hatred that time could never efface. The queen and the other enemies of the duke imagined that his death had secured them from all opposition; but the fatality of their mistake shews the shortsightedness of all human policy. Their criminal precaution eventually proved the ruin of the king, the queen, and all the parties concerned; for the death of this illustrious brother of Henry V. left the duke of York at liberty to assert his claim to the crown, to which he would never have dared to aspire, had the duke of Gloucester been alive to support the Lancastrian interest.

The descent of the house of March from an elder branch of the family of Edward III.

* Stowe's Ann. p. 398. Rapin i. p. 570.

has already been noticed. The duke of York was the sole heir of that house, and the disposition of the people towards the queen and the ministers, inspired him with the hope that he should one day be able to assert his title to the crown. But he saw the necessity of proceeding with circumspection, and without appearing himself in the business, endeavoured to prepare the public mind by his secret emissaries, who industriously spread among the people discourses calculated to impress them with a favourable opinion of his personal qualities, as well as to remind them of his hereditary rights.

Notwithstanding these precautions, the queen and all the Lancastrian party began to suspect the designs of the duke of York. In order, therefore, to diminish his credit, he was recalled from the regency of France, and that office was conferred on the duke of Somerset. The marquis of Suffolk was about the same time created duke of Suffolk, his influence became all-powerful at court; and the queen seemed to brave the public opinion, by accumulating honours and favours on a minister who was universally odious to the nation. His career, however, was drawing towards its termination. He was impeached by the Commons, who exhibited against him

a charge consisting of various articles, especially of being bribed by the French, and occasioning the loss of Normandy. Proofs could not be brought sufficient for his conviction; and probably many parts of the accusation might be false. But the queen, perceiving that his enemies were bent on his ruin, persuaded the king to send him into exile, in order to screen him from their vengeance. The duke immediately embarked for France, but could not avoid his destiny. The vessel in which he sailed was met by a ship belonging to the constable of the Tower,* the captain of which having seized the duke, caused him to be instantly beheaded.

By the death of this minister, the duke of York saw himself rid of a potent enemy. In the mean while, the discontents of the people against the government daily increased. An Irishman, named Jack Cade, raised a formidable insurrection in Kent, and led his tumultuous body of peasantry to London, under the specious pretext of reforming the government. The Londoners shewed their attachment to his cause, by opening their gates and receiving him into the city, where

* The constable of the Tower was the duke of Exeter. Tindal's notes on Rapin, l. p. 514.

he beheaded the lord treasurer. But a quarrel arising between the insurgents and the citizens, and a pardon being offered by royal proclamation, on condition of laying down their arms, Cade was deserted by his followers, and fled into Sussex, where he was discovered and slain.* It has never been doubted that the duke of York had fomented these disturbances, and his subsequent conduct corroborated the conjecture. He himself shortly after took arms, under the same pretext of reforming abuses, and especially of bringing the duke of Somerset to trial for the loss of Normandy. But, for this time, a civil war was prevented by negotiation. The king agreed to send Somerset to the Tower; and the duke of York disbanded his troops. But on coming to court, he found his rival at liberty. After a severe altercation between the two dukes in the presence chamber, the king ordered the duke of York to be arrested. But the posture of affairs, and the disposition of the people, rendered it dangerous to proceed against him. Had the enemies of the duke dared to gratify their resentment, he could never have freed himself from the snare into which he had fallen. By his death at

* Stowe's Ann. p. 392.

that juncture, the domination of the house of Lancaster might probably have been confirmed, and oceans of English blood have been spared. But the dread of a civil war induced the queen and the council to suffer him to retire, on a promise of strict obedience for the future: and for some time the duke of Somerset enjoyed, without a rival, the authority which he had acquired at court.

The duke of York, however, still aspired to the crown. The king falling sick, the intrigues of the duke's secret friends, who pretended to be of the court party, were so artfully employed, that he was admitted into the privy council, together with the two Nevilles, father and son, the former earl of Salisbury, and the latter earl of Warwick. The father was eminent for his prudence, the son was universally esteemed for his valour, and adored by the people for his engaging behaviour. With such colleagues the duke of York carried all before him. The duke of Somerset, being impeached by the Commons for the loss of Normandy, was sent to the Tower; and his rival was appointed by the parliament protector of the realm. After a period of nearly two years the king recovered from his indisposition, and resumed

A. D. 1455.

the government. The first effects of this change were the release of

the duke of Somerset and the dismissal of the duke of York from his office. The queen and the duke of Somerset had now an absolute sway in the council. And the duke of York withdrew from the court, where his situation was extremely precarious. Being sensible that by having the king in their power, the queen and the duke of Somerset possessed advantages which could be wrested from them only by force, he resolved to have recourse to arms, and soon saw himself at the head of a considerable body of troops.

From this period may be dated the commencement of the civil wars between the houses of York and Lancaster, which deluged England with the blood of her slaughtered inhabitants. The revolt of the duke of York obliged Henry to take the field; and the impotent monarch was dragged after his army to St. Alban's, where the first battle was

May 23d,
A. D. 1455. fought between the two parties. The earl of Warwick, who commanded the vanguard of the Yorkists, began the attack, which the duke supported with the main body. In a few moments the royal army was routed, and the duke of Somerset, its general, was slain, together with the earls of Northumberland and Stafford, the lord Clifford, and many other lords and officers of state, of whom forty-eight were buried in the

abbey of St. Alban's.* The loss in private soldiers is so differently stated by historians that no credit can be given to their contradictory accounts. The king, being wounded, took refuge in a cottage, where he was taken prisoner, and treated with apparent respect. Being conducted back to London he was suffered to retain the royal title, but was obliged to resign the authority to the duke of York, who was appointed protector with a salary of four thousand marks.

Henry was now a mere pageant of state, but he enjoyed the title of king which to him seemed sufficient. But the queen and all the lords, who were allied to the house of Lancaster, or attached to its interests, observing that the duke of York was making large strides towards the throne, began to take measures for stopping his progress. The duke of York was obliged to retire, in order to oppose their designs. After various cabals, and ineffectual negotiations, mutual distrust again brought the two parties to the field.* The earl of Salisbury defeated the royalists at Blareheath, where Lord Audley, Sept. 23, A. D. 1458. their general, and above two

* Stowe p. 400.

* For a detail of these particulars vide Rapin l. p. 581, &c.

thousand of his officers and soldiers were slain. The rebels soon after united all their forces, and the earl of Warwick came from Calais, and joined them with a considerable number of troops from that garrison. And the queen having, by extraordinary exertions, collected a numerous army, the king put himself at its head, and marched against the insurgents. But, for this time, the affair terminated without bloodshed. The duke of York was abandoned by his soldiers, and obliged to seek refuge in Ireland. The earls of Warwick and Salisbury, with the earl of March, eldest son of the duke of York, fled to Calais. Soon after the dispersion of the rebels, the parliament

Nov. 20th,
A. D. 1459. declared the duke of York and all his adherents guilty of high treason, and confiscated their estates.

The queen and the council, instead of using their success with moderation, resolved to extirpate the Yorkists, and dispatched commissioners into the provinces with orders to make strict inquiry for those who had borne arms in the late rebellion, and to punish them according to law. This violent proceeding blew up the spark which had seemed to be extinguished. The people of Kent had, on every occasion, shewn a strong attachment to

the duke of York, and dreading the resentment of the court, they sent a deputation to the rebel lords at Calais, inviting them to make a descent on their coasts, and assuring them of a general insurrection in their favour. This juncture appearing extremely favourable, the lords resolved to improve it to the best advantage, and the success answered their most sanguine expectation. Having landed with only fifteen hundred men, they were immediately joined by a body of four thousand, conducted by lord Cobham. With this reinforcement they advanced towards London, where the citizens were ready to open the gates for their reception. In their short march their army had increased to forty thousand men, and the archbishop of Canterbury, with the bishops of London, Lincoln, Exeter, and Ely, declared for them as soon as they entered the city. The lord Scales, who had thrown himself into the Tower with a body of troops, threatened to demolish the city with his cannon, but he was closely blockaded and soon reduced to great straits for want of provisions.

In the mean while the king and queen, having assembled their forces at Coventry, were advancing towards London. The rebels, on receiving intelligence of their march, immediately took the field, and resolved to give

battle to the royal army. Between Towcester and Northampton a decisive action took place. On the side of the royalists the queen was the acting general. She drew up the army in battalia and gave the necessary orders, while the king was led about an involuntary spectator of those martial transactions. The rebels were commanded by the earl of Warwick. After an obstinate contest, the desertion of lord Grey, who commanded a body of the king's army, and in the heat of the action went over to the rebels, decided the issue. The royal army was totally routed with the loss of ten thousand men. The duke of Buckingham, the earls of Shrewsbury and Beaumont, and several other nobles and officers of distinction, were killed. The queen, with the young prince of Wales, and the duke of Somerset, fled to the north, and never rested till they reached the bishoprick of Durham, where, not thinking themselves in safety, they retired into Wales, and afterwards took refuge in Scotland. The king was taken prisoner in his tent, where he waited the issue of the battle, and was conducted to his capital, surrounded by his rebellious subjects.

On his arrival at London a parliament was called; and the duke of York, who was now returned from Ireland, openly claimed the

crown as legitimate heir of the house of March, the elder branch of the family of Edward III. The cause of Henry and the duke was solemnly debated in parliament. At length it was determined that Henry should enjoy the crown during his life, and that the succession should devolve on the duke of York and his posterity. It must be observed that the parliament acted on this occasion with a freedom which could scarcely have been expected from the state of affairs and the spirit of the times, and that the duke of York shewed great moderation in contenting himself with the reversion of a crown, when he might have insisted on the immediate possession, and have supported the demand by the presence and efforts of a victorious army.

This settlement, which totally excluded the prince of Wales and the whole house of Lancaster from the throne, seemed to give no uneasiness to the king. He gave himself entirely up to devotion, and left the management of public affairs to the duke of York, who was, by sound of trumpet, proclaimed heir apparent to the crown and protector of the realm. But the queen was not of the same passive disposition. Though she had lost all, and seemed destitute of every resource,

she still retained her native perseverance and promised to those who should enlist under intrepidity. In order to procure soldiers, she her banners permission to plunder the country to the south of the Trent, and by this encouragement she collected in the northern parts of the kingdom an army of eighteen or according to others of twenty-two thousand men. The duke of York had heard that she was levying troops, but was not informed of her success. However he thought that he could not make too much speed to prevent her designs. He therefore marched from London with only four or five thousand men, ordering his son, the earl of March,* to follow with the rest of his army. Having proceeded to Wakefield, in Yorkshire, he received intelligence of the approach of the queen, and was there first informed of her strength. Although the duke of York was esteemed an able general, he fell into a fatal error in hazarding a battle against an army so greatly superior. The queen having placed
December 31, an ambuscade in his rear, began a
A. D. 1460. vigorous attack on his front. The troops placed in ambush at the same time fell on his rear. This unexpected attack threw

* Afterwards Edward IV.

the duke's troops into such confusion that within half an hour they were totally routed. The duke was slain on the field of battle: his second son, the earl of Rutland, who was only twelve years of age, attempted to fly, but was overtaken by Lord Clifford, who stabbed him to the heart. The earl of Salisbury being taken prisoner, was carried to Pontefract, and beheaded on a scaffold. As soon as the duke's body was found his head was cut off, and, being crowned with a paper-crown, was placed on the walls of York.

In this manner did the duke of York terminate his career when within one step of the throne. His son and successor, the earl of March, was still at the head of above twenty thousand men, and instead of being discouraged by his father's defeat, he resolved to revenge his death. The victorious Margaret, in the mean while, was marching to London, in order to secure that metropolis, the influence of which was sufficient to turn the scale in favour of either party. But on receiving intelligence that the earl of Pembroke, with a strong detachment of her army, had been defeated by the earl of March, with the loss of almost four thousand men, she halted at St. Alban's. The earl of Warwick, who had been left in London, being appre-

hensive that the citizens might admit the queen if she presented herself with a victorious army at their gates, resolved, if possible, to prevent her approach. In this view he drew his troops out of the capital, and marched directly to St. Alban's, where a battle was fought, in which victory declared for the queen. The earl lost above two thousand men; and the queen had the satisfaction of liberating the king whom Warwick had brought along with the army. Several prisoners of distinction were beheaded on the scaffold; and while the queen thus exercised her cruelty, her troops gratified their avarice by plundering the city of St. Alban's, declaring that they had been induced to take arms solely by the promise of having the plunder of all the country lying south of the Trent. This declaration was extremely prejudicial to the affairs of the queen, as the ravages every where committed by her troops rendered the Londoners extremely unwilling to admit her into the city; and several carts laden with provisions, which the mayor, at her request, was going to send to the army, were stopped at one of the gates by the populace.

The earl of March, in the mean while, was advancing with all possible expedition to-

wards London, in order to inspire the citizens with resolution to keep their gates shut against the queen; and at Chipping Norton, in Oxfordshire, he was joined by the remains of the earl of Warwick's army. Margaret, who was justly apprehensive of not being admitted into London, and of being obliged, in case she advanced that way, to engage an enemy superior in strength, at the gates of a great city that was hostile to her cause, did not venture to approach the metropolis, and immediately retired towards the north. The earl of March entered London; and his friends, without waiting the decision of a parliament, resolved to place him on the throne by an extraordinary election, first by the people, and then by the nobles. The army being drawn up in St. John's Fields, amidst immense crowds of people, the question was put whether they would have Edward, son of the late duke of York, to reign over them? All expressed their consent in loud acclamations. This first step being taken, a great council was convened, consisting of all the bishops, lords, magistrates, and gentlemen, in the city and neighbourhood of London. In this assembly, the crown was unanimously adjudged to Edward. On the morrow, he went in solemn procession to St. Paul's; and from thence was

conducted in great state to Westminster Hall. The archbishop of Canterbury again asked the people if they would have Edward for their king? and they answered again by loud acclamations. The ceremony concluded with singing "*Te Deum*," and on the following day Edward was proclaimed king of England, in London and the neighbouring towns.

Queen Margaret, in the mean while, was exerting all her activity in raising new levies; and the northern counties, which were strongly attached to the house of Lancaster, gave her, on this occasion, such proofs of their affection, that she saw herself in a short time at the head of sixty thousand men. Edward was sensible of the necessity of immediately opposing so formidable an armament. Though he had acquired the regal title, he knew that it could be maintained only by force; and neither he nor the great men of his party could see any hope of safety, except in success. Within seven or eight days after being proclaimed king, he marched from London towards the North. One of his detachments forced the pass of Ferrybridge, over the river Aire; but this body was afterwards defeated by the queen's troops, who recovered that important post. The earl of Warwick in-

formed the king of this disaster, with an emotion that shewed him apprehensive of the consequences ; but to shew that his fears were not personal, he stabbed his horse, and kissing the hilt of his sword, which was made in the form of a cross, swore that if the whole army should take to flight, he alone would defend the king and his cause. Edward, however, trusting to his courage and fortune, was far from being disheartened, and in order to prevent any bad effects that consternation might produce among his troops, he informed them by a proclamation, that all who desired it were at liberty to depart, promising at the same time to reward those who should do their duty ; but declaring that no mercy should be shewn to any that should fly during the battle. He then sent William Neville, lord Fauconbridge, to pass the river Aire at Castleford, near Ferrybridge, and to attack the post lately lost. This officer executed his orders with such expedition and secrecy, that he attacked the enemy before they had any notice of his march. Lord Clifford, who had so inhumanly butchered the young earl of Rutland after the battle of Wakefield, was killed ; and his troops were entirely routed. The important post of Ferrybridge being thus recovered, Edward passed over the river, and

proceeded in quest of the enemy. The queen, at the same time, was equally desirous of bringing the affair to a speedy decision, as a victory was the only means left for the restoration of her husband. The duke of Somerset was intrusted with the command of her army, while she and Henry remaining at York, waited the issue of a battle that was to determine their fate.

The two armies met near Towton, a village in the neighbourhood of Tadcaster, where they drew up in order of battle.* The army of Henry was sixty thousand strong: that of Edward amounted to forty, or according to some, to forty-eight thousand men. On Palm-Sunday the bloody conflict took place.

March 29, It continued from morning till
A. D. 1461. night, no quarter was given, and never was victory more obstinately contested. Never before had England seen so terrible a day. Never was there a more remarkable instance of the folly of the people. A hundred thousand men of the same nation were seen fighting for no interests of their own, but merely to satisfy the empty ambition of a few weak and worthless individuals, and

* Stowe, p. 415. Rapin says that the battle was fought between Towton and Saxton. Towton is two miles nearly South-East from Tadcaster. Saxton is one mile and a half almost S. W. from Towton.

butchering one another to determine whether an idiot or a boy should wear a crown set with diamonds. Yet, in deciding this dispute, above thirty-six thousand fell on the field of battle, and the waters of the Wharf were tinged with blood. Such is the infatuation of mankind: such are the direful consequences of civil dissensions. On this terrible day, Edward distinguished himself by an extraordinary valour, which greatly contributed to maintain his troops in their resolution of conquering or dying in his service. But the earl of Warwick was the acting general, and to his martial abilities the result of the battle must be chiefly ascribed. Edward, however, had the good fortune to gain a decisive victory, which established him on the throne. And Margaret, with her son and her husband, took refuge in Scotland. Edward now took down the heads of his father and the earl of Salisbury from the walls of York, and placed in their stead the heads of the vanquished generals. In these disastrous contests, each party, as it happened to be victorious, called in the executioner to complete on the scaffold the tragedy begun in the field.

Edward having subdued all opposition in the north, returned to London, and called a

parliament to confirm the revolution which had placed him on the throne. At such a juncture, the sanction of parliament was not difficult to obtain. How irregular soever the election of Edward had been, he was at the head of a victorious army, and no one dared to question his right. Henry VI. after a reign of thirty-eight years, was deemed an usurper, and all that he had done while on the throne was annulled, as wanting a lawful authority, while all the proceedings of the Yorkists, which had so lately been denominated treasons, were legalized. Thus the terms right and wrong are generally reversed by political revolutions.

Thus ended the reign of Henry VI. one of the most disastrous that England had seen. The loss of all the English provinces in France, ought not, perhaps, to be deemed a misfortune. They had been a source of almost continual quarrels, and a gulf which drained England of men and of money. It is certain that the disasters of the English abroad, greatly contributed to their unhappiness at home. Such is the folly of mankind, that triumphs always dazzle the eyes of the people, though obtained at the expence of their blood and their treasures. While their minds were infatuated by the glories of Cres-

sey, Poitiers, and Agincourt, they remained unconcerned at the exhaustion of their country, and eagerly seconded the ruinous projects of their kings. Henry VI. was a prince of a feeble capacity, but his life was inoffensive; and it does not appear that his reign was tyrannical, or that even the measures of the queen and the ministers were inimical to the rights of the people. But the war in France was unsuccessful, and the events which took place in that country, excited discontents among the people of England, which disposed them to support the claims of York against the reigning family of Lancaster. On comparing the state of England towards the end of this reign with that of France, when invaded by Henry V. it appears that a formidable attack from France or Scotland, might, at that juncture, have been attended with dreadful consequences. But happily for England, Louis XI. discarding all thoughts of foreign conquests, was wholly employed in rendering himself master of his own kingdom, by humbling the aristocracy of France, and James II. was prosecuting the same design with equal assiduity in Scotland. Notwithstanding the miseries of this reign, it proved the auspicious æra of the introduction of the art of printing into

England, a lasting benefit, more than sufficient to counterbalance any temporary calamities.

EDWARD IV.

EDWARD IV. had obtained the crown ; but it was long before he found it to sit easy on his head. The first opposition that he experienced was from Margaret, his implacable enemy. No calamities whatever could overcome the courage and perseverance of that princess. Having, by earnest solicitations, obtained from the French king an inconsiderable body of troops, she again resolved to enter England. But she was attended by her usual ill fortune. Her little squadron was dispersed by a storm : most of her ships and troops fell into the hands of the enemy ; and it was not without extreme difficulty that she found means to enter the

Tweed. The Scots, however, espoused her cause, and she entered Northumberland with an army that daily increased. Her forces thus becoming considerable, she again tried the fortune of arms, and was defeated near Hexham, by lord Montague, brother of the earl of Warwick. She and her husband were obliged to seek safety in a separate flight, without attendants and even without the necessaries of life. The weak and unfortunate Henry, almost invariably imprudent and consequently unsuccessful, hoped to lie concealed in England till an opportunity should offer of escaping to the continent: this project was attended with the obvious consequences: he was soon recognized, seized, conducted with ignominy to London, and confined in the Tower.*

Margaret was more fortunate; for she found means to escape, with the prince her son, into Flanders, where the duke of Burgundy gave them a favourable reception. The dukes of Somerset and Exeter also took refuge in the low countries, where they durst not make themselves known, lest they should be delivered to Edward. In this obscure exile they suffered all the calamities that

* Rymer's *fed.* tom. 11. p. 548.—Stowe p. 419.

poverty could inflict on persons of their rank. Philip de Commines says, that he saw the duke of Exeter, before he was recognized, following the duke of Burgundy's equipage barefooted and in extreme distress. After these two noblemen were known, the duke granted them a trifling pension for their subsistence. These were strange vicissitudes for persons who had been born to affluence, who had conducted armies, and were allied to kings and princes. Such instances of the reverses of fortune, however, are not unfrequent in the history of civil wars and national revolutions, especially in semi-barbarous ages.

Edward, being now fixed on the throne in apparent peace and security, sent the earl of Warwick to Paris to negotiate a treaty of marriage between him and Bona of Savoy, sister-in-law of the French monarch. This proposal was extremely agreeable to Louis XI. who desired nothing more than peace and alliance with England, in order to prevent any interruption to his design of depressing the feudal system in France. The treaty was therefore concluded without difficulty. But while the earl of Warwick was carrying on this negotiation with assiduity and success, the king rendered his labours ineffectual, by

espousing Elizabeth Woodville, widow of Sir John Grey, a lady of great beauty and virtue, with whom he became acquainted by accident. The earl was grievously incensed at this affront, and abhorred the ingratitude of the monarch, whom he had placed on the throne. Edward perceiving him to be greatly disgusted, began to consider him as a secret enemy, and widened the breach by totally withdrawing his confidence, while he accumulated favours on the relatives of the queen, and raised them to the highest honours. The earl of Warwick was filled with indignation on seeing his credit sunk and his services disregarded. He was the proudest as well as the most powerful baron of England, but his prudence was equal to his pride, and he dissembled his resentment till he had taken proper measures for executing his designs. By representing to the king's eldest brother, the duke of Clarence, the dangerous influence of the queen and her family, he found means to seduce that prince, and in order to attach him firmly to his interests, he gave him his daughter in marriage. As soon as his plot was ripe for execution, Warwick and Clarence erected the standard of rebellion. Negotiations and stratagems followed one another in rapid succession. The earl of Warwick being

completely versed with the arts of dissimulation, proved too subtle for the young monarch.* Having amused him for some time with negotiations, he suddenly attacked his camp in the night. The troops, being thus surprised, were thrown into confusion; and the king saw himself in the hands of his enemies before he could take any measures either for defence or escape. Edward, being thus made prisoner, was conducted to Warwick, and the earl afterwards committed him to the custody of his brother the archbishop of York.†

Edward, although he had, through a fatal want of vigilance, suffered himself to be thus surprised, soon shewed himself not inferior to his enemies in subtlety; and compensated, by stratagem, his former imprudence. By his insinuating behaviour, or perhaps by bribery, he obtained leave of the archbishop to hunt in the park, with a feeble guard; and improved this liberty so well that he found means to effect his escape. In a very short time he arrived at London, where he was received without difficulty, as the earl of War-

* Rapin l. p. 606, 607.

† George Neville, brother of the earl of Warwick, was promoted to the archbishoprick of York by Edward IV. in the year 1464.

wick, not expecting such a turn, had taken no measures for securing the metropolis. It is easy to conceive the surprise with which the earl of Warwick and the duke of Clarence received intelligence of the king's unexpected escape. The earl ordered Sir Robert Wells, one of his partizans, to levy troops in the county of Lincoln, where his interest was very considerable; and the king having also raised an army, both parties prepared to decide the contest by arms. Edward resolved to attack Wells before he should be joined by Warwick and Clarence, who were raising men in other parts of the kingdom. A battle was fought near Stamford, in which the king
A. D. 1470. was victorious. The rebels left ten thousand men dead on the field; and Wells, their general, lost his life on the scaffold, a fate which his father, lord Wells, had recently experienced.

This defeat broke all the measures of the earl of Warwick and the duke of Clarence. The king was marching to attack them, and they were not yet prepared for action. In this extremity they were obliged to seek safety in flight, and with great difficulty made their escape into France, where they were kindly received by Louis XI. who was then at Amboise. That prince had refused to

intermeddle with the affairs of England, while Edward and Henry were contending for the crown; but political views are as variable as the wind or the weather, and constantly changing with circumstances. He was not only exasperated at the affront received from Edward in the affair of his marriage, but jealous of the alliance which the English monarch had lately concluded with the dukes of Bretagne and Burgundy. Apprehensive that the French princes and nobles, whom he intended to humble, might be protected by Edward, he resolved to find him such employment in his own kingdom, as might prevent him from interposing in the affairs of his neighbours. Nothing, in fine, could be more desireable to the French monarch than to see the civil war rekindled in England. These considerations induced him not only to receive the fugitive English, but to promise them his assistance. He also sent for queen Margaret, who had retired to her father, the king of Sicily. Here was another of these unexpected turns which frequently take place in political alliances. The earl of Warwick had been the chief author of the misfortunes of that princess; and he, on his part, considered her as his mortal enemy. But the earl wanted a plau-

sible pretext for dethroning Edward, and nothing could answer this purpose so well as the restoration of Henry. On the other hand, Margaret could have no hope of recovering the splendour from which she had fallen, but by an union with Warwick. In these circumstances, Louis XI. found no difficulty in effecting a reconciliation between these two formerly implacable adversaries; and the alliance was cemented by the marriage of the prince of Wales with the daughter of the earl of Warwick. Thus the duke of Clarence, brother of king Edward, became brother-in-law to the son of Henry and Margaret; and the earl of Warwick was equally allied to the houses of York and Lancaster.

In the mean while, the duke of Burgundy, who had faithful and vigilant spies at the court of France, informed the king of England of all these transactions. But Edward, relying on the affections of the people, who had hitherto so zealously supported his cause, apprehended no danger from the fugitive lords, whom he considered as totally destitute of power and credit. The union of the duke of Clarence with his enemies gave him some uneasiness; and a female domestic of the duchess was employed to bring him back to his allegiance. This woman artfully

and successfully executed her commission. She represented to the duke that his conduct, in supporting the house of Lancaster against his own family, must end in his ruin. The case was plain, and the arguments were obvious. The Lancastrian family, when replaced on the throne, could never put confidence in a prince of the house of York. Nor was it forgotten that the king having only an infant daughter, if death should snatch her from the world, the duke of Clarence would be the next heir to the crown; but that in case the house of Lancaster should be restored, his hopes must be for ever extinguished. It was impossible not to yield to these considerations; and the duke promised to declare for Edward as soon as he could do it with safety, and with the probability of rendering him a considerable service.

The earl of Warwick, in the mean while, was preparing to return into England. But Louis XI whose principal view was to foment discord among the English, at little expence, supplied him very sparingly with money and troops. The duke of Burgundy sent a fleet to block up the port of Havre de Grace, in order to prevent the English rebels from sailing; but the Flemish ships being dispersed by a storm, the earl of Warwick and

the duke of Clarence took that opportunity
Sept. 13th, of putting to sea, and arrived in
A. D. 1470. safety at Dartmouth, from which
port they had, about five months before,
embarked for France.

The landing of the rebellious lords was so far from giving Edward any concern, that he rather rejoiced at having the earl of Warwick, as he thought, in his power; and he desired the duke of Burgundy to keep a fleet at sea, in order to intercept him if he should attempt to return to France. But he soon perceived his error, in relying too much on popular favour. The earl of Warwick was joined by such numbers, that he soon saw himself at the head of sixty thousand men. With this force, he considered himself as superior to all opposition, and immediately proclaimed Henry VI. issuing, at the same time, an order in his name, requiring all his subjects from sixteen to sixty years of age to take arms and expel Edward, who was declared a tyrant and usurper.

An event, so unexpected, shewed Edward the fallacy of his calculations. He levied some troops; but his army not being sufficiently strong to meet that of the enemy, he retired towards the coast. Having encamped near Lynn, in Norfolk, he took up his

quarters in the castle. The earl of Warwick pursued with celerity, and as soon as he made his appearance, the cause of Edward was abandoned by the army that was raised for its support. The name of king Henry resounded through the camp, and the shouts of the soldiers being heard at the castle, announced to Edward the general defection. Having no time to deliberate, and seeing no safety but in flight, he embarked with seven or eight hundred faithful troops on board of three vessels that were lying in the harbour, being accompanied by his brother the duke of Gloucester, and others of his adherents.* Not knowing whither to retire, except into the dominions of his brother-in-law, the duke of Burgundy, he steered directly for Holland; and after having narrowly escaped being taken by some corsairs, reached the coast. Having made signals to implore the protection of the country, the lord of Gruthuyse came on board, and having conducted Edward to the Hague, maintained him at his own expence, till he could receive orders from the duke of Burgundy relative to the disposal of the royal fugitive.†

* Phil. de Comm. lib. 11. c. 5.

† Holland, as well as the rest of the Netherlands, were then under the dominion of the duke of Burgundy.

The queen, with a number of Yorkists, on hearing of the king's flight, took sanctuary in Westminster abbey, where she was delivered of a son, named Edward. In the beginning

of October, the earl of Warwick
A. D. 1470.

and the duke of Clarence entered London. Henry, after being prisoner six years in the Tower, was released from his

confinement, and solemnly pro-
Oct. 6th & 25th, A. D. 1470.

claimed king, amidst the acclamations of the populace. Thus, the earl of Warwick having restored Henry whom he had deposed, and pulled down Edward whom he had placed on the throne, obtained the title of king-maker.

On the 26th November a parliament was called to confirm this new revolution. The victorious party had recourse to the same expedient when Edward ascended the throne. Formalities, indeed, are requisite to satisfy the people; but the contradictory resolutions of parliaments, during the contests between the houses of York and Lancaster, shew that these assemblies always adhered to the strongest. But if they did not act with freedom they acted with prudence. The quarrel had its origin and existence in the royal family, and could scarcely be called national. The nation had alternately re-

cognized the rights of both houses: all the revolutions were effected by intrigue and by violence; and if the parliament had, in these calamitous times, refused to confirm the acts of the victors, their fortitude might probably have only served to increase the public calamities. Thus Edward, in his turn, was declared by parliament a traitor and an usurper, as Henry had formerly been by the same authority.

The earl of Warwick now exercised the royal authority in the name of the king. Henry possessed the regal title; but the queen having engagements which detained her in France, the earl of Warwick and the duke of Clarence were appointed governors of the kingdom, and all who had borne arms in defence of Edward's right, were declared rebels and traitors. The mutual severities of the two parties, by alternately forcing each other into desperate measures, seem to have greatly contributed to prolong the contest and to produce so many successive revolutions.

While these transactions took place in England, the fugitive monarch experienced various mortifications at the court of Burgundy. The duke, indeed, found himself placed in a difficult predicament. He knew the designs of Louis XI. against his do-

minions: he was actually involved in a war, with that prince, and had already lost some strong places. He had, therefore, every reason to believe, that if he espoused the cause of Edward, the earl of Warwick would join the forces of England to those of France, in order to effect his destruction.* On the other hand he could scarcely hope to resist the arms of France without the assistance of England, which was to be expected only from the restoration of Edward. Every thing, therefore, depended on the success of the undertaking, which, if it miscarried, would serve the earl of Warwick, who ruled over England with sovereign authority, as a plausible pretext for joining with Louis in attacking the Burgundian dominions. In this perplexity the duke devised an expedient for concealing his views and saving appearances, by publicly disclaiming all connexion with Edward, and giving him secret assistance. He employed private persons to hire ships for conveying the fugitive king and his adherents to England; and he also furnished him with the sum of fifty thousand florins. These

* Rapin says that the earl had already sent 4000 English troops to Calais for that purpose; but Commynes, the best informed historian of those times, asserts, that he had only formed that design, and assigns the reason of its non-execution. Comm. lib. 3. c. 6.

preparatory measures being taken, Edward set sail from Flushing, and after his departure, the duke, in order to throw a veil over his part of the transaction, issued a proclamation, forbidding his subjects, under the penalty of death, to give him any kind of assistance.

Edward disembarked his forces, consisting of only two thousand men, at Ravenspur, in

March 14th, Yorkshire, the place where Henry
A. D. 1471. IV. had formerly landed, when he

came to wrest the sceptre from Richard II. He expected to be received with acclamations; but in this he found himself greatly deceived. The people were divided in sentiment, and those even who were well affected to the house of York, seeing him attended by so slender a force, were afraid of openly espousing his cause. Edward, therefore, in order to excite their compassion and veil his designs, followed the example of Henry IV. in circumstances nearly similar. Without mentioning his pretensions to the crown, he caused a report to be spread that he was come only as duke of York to claim his paternal inheritance, which had been confiscated; and this device operated so powerfully in his favour, that the magistrates of York could not prevent the people from receiving him into the city. Edward promised not only to

do no damage to the citizens but always to remain the king's faithful subject, and, on his entering the city, he went to the cathedral and confirmed the engagement with an oath.^a But in the business of politics, especially amidst civil dissensions, promises and oaths are used only as ladders to facilitate some difficult ascent. Having thus conducted his affairs at York, Edward borrowed some money of the wealthy inhabitants, and his army being greatly increased during his short stay in that city, he left a garrison and departed for London.

In the mean while the earl of Warwick and the duke of Clarence separated themselves in order to assemble their forces. It was now that Edward relied on the duke, his brother, for the performance of his promise. The earl, who little suspected what mischief was lurking, sent successive expresses desiring the duke of Clarence to join him near Coventry. But the duke having gained the principal officers of his army, caused Edward to be proclaimed in his camp, and immediately afterwards joined him with his forces. This was a stunning blow to the earl of Warwick, and enough to have totally discouraged any other commander. But the earl, besides great experience in war, possessed a mind fertile

in resources, and a fortitude not to be overcome by difficulties.

To be master of the metropolis, and to have Henry in his power, were considered by Edward as objects of the greatest importance. He was no sooner joined by the duke, his brother, than he began his march towards London. The earl of Warwick hoping that the Londoners would shut their gates against Edward, immediately followed, in the design of obliging him either to retire, or to hazard a battle before the walls of the city under great disadvantages. His expectation, however, proved fallacious. When the news reached London that Edward and his brother had joined their forces, and were in full march for the city, the earl of Warwick was given up as lost. This belief inspired the people with a terror, which the partizans of Edward carefully cherished, by aggravating the danger of the city in being exposed to the effects of his indignation, unless it was prevented by a speedy submission. The Yorkists who, on Edward's flight, had taken refuge in Westminster abbey, now came out and supported his interests, while the opposite party dared not to open their mouths. The people, without waiting the decision of the magistrates, resolved to open the gates, and

the archbishop of York and the duke of Somerset, whom the earl of Warwick had left in the metropolis, could not be heard. Edward therefore entered London amidst the

April 11th, acclamations of the inhabitants ;
A. D. 1471.

and the passive Henry was again imprisoned in the Tower, from whence he had been taken seven months before to be replaced on the throne.

Edward had not time to make a long stay at London. Two days after his arrival he departed to put himself at the head of his army, on receiving intelligence that the earl of Warwick had advanced as far as St. Alban's. The earl was extremely embarrassed : he saw the metropolis lost, and the whole kingdom ready to declare for his enemy : his force was inferior to that of Edward, whose army was greatly augmented since his entrance into London ; and he suspected the fidelity of his own brother the marquis of Montague, who commanded a corps of his army, and whose conduct had been somewhat mysterious. In this perplexing situation, he had no other alternative than victory or ruin, and he nobly resolved to conquer or perish. With this determination he advanced to Barnet, on the north road, about ten miles from London, where a most sanguinary conflict took place.

April 14th,
A. D. 1471.

The battle began early in the morning and lasted till noon: no quarter was given, and never did two armies contend with greater obstinacy. In these bloody civil wars, frequent revolutions and alternate massacres had carried animosity to the highest pitch, and no mercy was ever either shewn or expected. Edward displayed all the courage and presence of mind of a consummate general. The earl of Warwick, however, had for some time so greatly the advantage, that the news of his victory was carried to London. The palm indeed appears to have been snatched from him by accident. The earl of Oxford bore on his arms and his colours a star, and the device of Edward was a sun. A mist which arose during the battle, preventing the troops, led by the earl of Warwick, from perceiving the difference, they made an impetuous attack on the corps commanded by the earl of Oxford, who had repulsed an attack on his flank, and was wheeling back to his post, which had been left too much exposed.* This mistake caused an extreme confusion in the army, as those who saw themselves thus

* The earl of Oxford and the marquis of Montague commanded the right wing, the earl of Warwick and the duke of Exeter commanded the left.

attacked by their own comrades, imagined it to be the effect of treachery. Edward seeing the disorder, seized this important moment, and made an impetuous charge. The earl of Warwick did all that was possible to rectify the mistake; but finding the day irrecoverably lost, he rushed on foot among the thickest of his enemies, and quickly fell covered with wounds. The marquis of Montague, his brother, perished by his side. The earl of Oxford and the duke of Somerset escaped into Wales to the earl of Pembroke. And the duke of Exeter being severely wounded and left among the slain, crawled to a neighbouring cottage, from whence he found means to be conveyed to London, and took sanctuary in Westminster abbey.

Thus terminated the bloody and decisive battle of Barnet.* All historians concur in representing the conflict as extremely obstinate and sanguinary, but entirely disagree in their statements of the numbers, both of those that were engaged and of those that were slain. Hollingshed says that the army of Edward did not exceed nine thousand: of that of the earl of Warwick we have no

* In commemoration of this battle, a monument is erected near the side of the road leading from Barnet to Hatfield.

account that can be considered as authentic. Rapin says that 10,000 of the earl's troops were slain. According to Hall's account, ten thousand fell on both sides, and Stowe reduces the number to four thousand, which seems to be too low an estimate. Such is the difficulty that almost always occurs in the ascertainment of numbers. But the battle of Barnet is memorable, not only from its effects in re-establishing Edward on the throne, but for the death of the earl of Warwick, the greatest general at that time in England, or probably in Europe. Exceedingly artful and extremely brave, equally skilful in the council and in the field, he was peculiarly formed for times of trouble, and set up and tumbled down kings at his pleasure.

Margaret, in the mean while, was just returned from France. Within two days after the battle, she received the disastrous intelligence of the defeat and death of the earl of Warwick, and instantly perceived the inevitable consequences. Though she had hitherto supported with undaunted courage the vicissitudes of her fortune, she lost on this occasion the firmness by which her character was so gloriously distinguished, and, yielding to her grief, fell into a swoon, from which she was recovered with difficulty. As she could not

discover on any side the least encouraging prospect, she resolved to consult the safety of her son, and for that purpose took refuge in a monastery. Here the duke of Somerset and his brother, with the earls of Pembroke and Devonshire, and some other lords, came and offered her their services. The least dawn of hope was sufficient to revive her courage; and the remembrance of her numerous misfortunes gave way to the flattering prospect of a successful effort. The earl of Pembroke immediately departed for Wales, in order to levy troops, and the other lords separating themselves went into the western counties for the same purpose. The expedition with which men were raised on this occasion appears astonishing, and must, in a great measure, be attributed to the vindictive animosity raised in the minds of the people by a long series of civil wars, and the mutual cruelties of the two parties. It must also be remembered, that the remains of the earl of Warwick's army being dispersed without a leader, after the battle of Barnet, and expecting no mercy, chose rather to venture their lives again in the field, than to run the risk of perishing on the gibbet or the scaffold. Such was the agitation of mind among the English, that although the Lancastrian cause appeared

to be desperate, yet within a few days after the battle of Barnet, the lords of that party had assembled a new army.

Edward having notice of their preparations, lost not a moment. He put himself at the head of his troops and set out from London, in order to give battle to the duke of Somerset, who commanded the Lancastrian army, and was expecting to be joined by the earl of Pembroke. The duke having intelligence of his march, was desirous of avoiding an action till the intended junction should be effected, and for that purpose resolved to retire into Wales. The great object was to pass the Severn before Edward should arrive with his army. Gloucester was the place where the queen and the duke had intended to effect their passage; but that city having shut its gates against them, they resolved to cross the river near Tewksbury. But the sudden appearance of Edward left them only the alternative of passing the Severn in the presence of the enemy, and exposing their rear to certain destruction, or of intrenching themselves till the arrival of the earl of Pembroke from Wales. The queen, anxious for the preservation of the young prince her son, was desirous of adopting the former measure; but the duke of Somerset

April 19th,
A. D. 1471.

inclined to the latter, and in a council of the generals his opinion prevailed. This resolution being taken, the whole night was employed in throwing up the intrenchments.

Edward, observing the assiduity of the Lancastrians in fortifying their camp, judged it highly expedient to attack them before it should be rendered impregnable, and their army be reinforced by the earl of Pembroke, whose arrival was hourly expected. Richard, duke of Gloucester, afterwards Richard III. who commanded the first line of Edward's army, began the attack, but was vigorously repulsed. The precipitation with which he retired induced the duke of Somerset to suppose that the Yorkists were routed. He instantly pursued, and ordered Lord Wenlock to support him with the second division. But this nobleman disobeying his injunctions, and Edward making an impetuous charge with his whole army, Somerset was soon overpowered by numbers, and driven back to his camp, where he found Wenlock, who had not moved from his post. The duke, seeing all was lost through the inactivity of that lord, was unable to govern his rage, and running furiously on the coward, dashed out his brains with a blow of his battle-ax. The Lancastrians being now thrown into confusion, the

king and the duke of Gloucester forced an entrance into their camp, and made a terrible slaughter. The earl of Devonshire and several

May 3rd,
A. D. 1471.

other persons of note were slain. The queen, the prince of Wales, the duke of Somerset, and the prior of St. John's were taken prisoners.* The prince being brought into the presence of the victor, appeared before him with an undaunted countenance. On being asked, by Edward, why he had been so rash as to enter his kingdom in arms, he boldly replied, "I have entered the dominions of my father, to revenge his injuries and assert my own rights." The barbarous monarch, enraged at this answer, struck him on the mouth with his gauntlet. This seemed to be the signal for his death: the dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, with the earl of Dorset and lord Hastings, rushing upon the unarmed youth, stabbed him to the heart with their daggers†. On the following day the duke of Somerset and the grand prior of St. John were executed on the scaffold, and none were spared who had been taken in arms except queen Margaret, who, in all probability, owed her life

* Hollingshed dates the battle of Tewksbury on the 4th May, and Hall on the 3rd. Vide Hall, 221.

† This unfortunate young prince was eighteen years of age when he was thus cruelly butchered. Rapin 1. p. 615.

to the expectation that Louis XI. whose queen was her aunt, would pay a large sum for her ransom. She was, therefore, confined in the Tower, and, after remaining about four years a prisoner, the French monarch paid Edward fifty thousand crowns for her freedom. Thus terminated the political career of Margaret of Anjou, who had supported the cause of her husband in twelve battles, and experienced the greatest vicissitudes. After having survived her fortune and her children, she died in privacy in France. The courage with which she faced dangers, and the firmness with which she supported adversity, command admiration; but the torrents of English blood which her intriguing ambition caused to be shed, leave her no claim to pity.

The death of the unfortunate Henry completed the tragedy. The inoffensive life of that prince had hitherto screened him from the vengeance of his victorious rival. Edward had twice spared his life, but at length thought it requisite to sacrifice him to his policy, as his name might again serve as a pretext for rebellion. The duke of Gloucester is said to have been his executioner, and to have stabbed him with his own hand in the Tower.* Thus died Henry VI. in the

* This, however, is uncertain.

fiftieth year of his age, having reigned thirty-eight years before he was dethroned, and seven months after his restoration. He appears to have been equally destitute of virtues and vices: as a man his life was innocent; but as a sovereign his natural incapacity rendered him totally unfit to govern his kingdom. Had Henry been a private gentleman, he might have been beloved and respected: his great misfortune was that of being a king.

The twelve battles which had been fought since the commencement of the civil war in 1455, and the bloody executions by which they had been followed, had greatly diminished the number of the princes descended from Edward III. The house of Lancaster was reduced to only two persons, Margaret, wife of Edmund Tudor, earl of Richmond, and Henry, earl of Richmond, her son, who was destined to ascend the throne of England. After the battle of Tewksbury had apparently extinguished the hopes and almost the existence of his family, the young earl of Richmond, with his uncle the earl of Pembroke, retired into Bretagne. Edward sent ambassadors to the duke of Bretagne to solicit the delivery of these two lords into his hands; but the proposal was rejected. The

duke, however, in consideration of a large annual pension, which Edward agreed to pay, engaged to keep them as prisoners, and assigned them the town of Vannes for their residence, where they had an honourable allowance, with a considerable degree of liberty, being only watched to prevent their escape. Edward having nothing more to fear after the death, imprisonment, or exile of the principal adherents of the house of Lancaster, proceeded to the punishment of those of inferior note: the gibbets were hung with the bodies of his adversaries, and their estates were confiscated to his use.

By these severities Edward rendered himself terrible to his enemies, and extinguished every thought of opposition to his authority. England now enjoyed a temporary calm, which, however, was soon interrupted by troubles which arose on the continent. The duke of Burgundy having seized the duchy of Gueldres, this acquisition inspired him with the design of enlarging his dominions on the side of Germany.* A dispute between Robert of Bavaria and the brother of the

* Commes lib. 4. c. 1.—Philip de Commes is one of the best authorities that can be consulted on the transactions between Edward IV. Louis XI. and Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy. He was born a subject of the duke of Burgundy, and in the year 1472 quitted

Landgrave of Hesse, furnished the pretext that he wanted. His project was to erect Burgundy into a kingdom, and to make himself master of all the German territory to the west of the Rhine, as far as Basil, in Switzerland.* He therefore declared for Robert of Bavaria, and, under colour of supporting that prince, began his operations by the siege of Nuits. This undertaking excited the jealousy of the German princes. Louis XI. was not less alarmed; and by his intrigues he brought the emperor, the duke of Lorain, and the Swiss, into a league against the duke of Burgundy, who to free himself from this embarrassment, had recourse to the king of England, to whom he represented the opportunity as favourable for reviving the claims of his predecessors to the crown of France. He offered to join Edward with all his forces, as soon as he should land in Picardy, and assured him of the aid of the Constable de St. Pol and the duke of Bretagne.

This was precisely the opportunity for which Edward impatiently waited. He ex-

his service, and entered into that of Louis XI. Under these two princes he was long employed in the most important transactions both in the cabinet and the field, and possessed excellent means of information.

* Pres. Hen. Ab. Chron. An. 1474.

pected to find France in the same state of confusion as when invaded by Henry V. He therefore immediately concluded with the duke of Burgundy a treaty, by which they partitioned the whole kingdom of France according to their interests and inclinations. But it is easier to make a division of provinces, by agreement, than to take possession by arms. Edward, however, enjoyed in imagination his expected acquisition. The nation, not yet cured of its madness in desiring to unite France to England, or rather to annex England to France, and unable to see the ruinous tendency of the project, partook in the extravagant hopes of the king. The parliament granted a subsidy; and Edward passed over to Calais with a con-

June 30th,
A. D. 1475.

siderable force. On his arrival he found himself betrayed by the Constable of St. Pol, and deserted by the duke of Burgundy, who was either unable or unwilling to fulfil his engagements.* Edward finding himself in a situation which he had little expected, concluded a treaty at Amiens

August 29th,
A. D. 1475.

with the French monarch: a truce of seven years was agreed on; and

* Henault says the duke of Burgundy was deserted by Edward, which appears scarcely probable. An. 1475.

a contract of marriage was settled between the Dauphin and Elizabeth the daughter of Edward. Louis also engaged to pay annually to Edward the sum of fifty thousand crowns during the lives of the two kings, besides seventy-five thousand crowns in ready money.* This treaty was ratified by the two kings at an interview which they had at Picquigney; and so extremely desirous was Louis of seeing the English army leave France, that he secretly bribed the principal courtiers of Edward, and established with them a secret correspondence, which cost him sixteen thousand crowns a year in pensions.† For this paltry sum the courtiers of Edward sold the interests of their master; and the politic Louis considered it as well employed in purchasing the ministers of a powerful kingdom.

Edward now returned to England to riot in voluptuousness, to which he was excessively addicted. But while he and his kingdom remained in tranquillity, the continent witnessed events of which the consequences were felt by England, but much more by France and Germany. Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy, being killed at the battle

* It was at this treaty that the ransom and liberation of Margaret of Anjou was agreed on.

† Phil. de Comm. lib. 6. cap. 2.

of Nanci, left only one daughter, named Maria, who was sole heiress of his extensive dominions.* This young princess was immediately attacked by the French monarch, who seized on the province of Artois, and prepared to dispossess her of the rest of her territories.† In this distressful situation she implored the aid of England, but her solicitations were ineffectual. Edward acted, on this occasion, in direct contrariety to the interests of England, in suffering the aggrandizement of France at the expence of the house of Burgundy. But different causes are assigned for his conduct. He was grown corpulent and heavy, and no longer fit to support the hardships of war: he was unwilling by any proceeding to obstruct the intended marriage of his daughter with the Dauphin; and above all his principal counsellors were pensioners of France.

* The battle of Nanci was fought by Charles the Bold against the duke of Lorraine. He was slain by the treachery of a Neapolitan officer, a soldier of fortune, who commanded a body of Italians in the duke's service. He went over to the enemy in the heat of the battle, leaving some desperadoes, to whom he had given orders to kill the duke of Burgundy. Comm. lib. 5. cap. 8.

† The death of Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy, may be regarded as the source of all the wars between France and the house of Austria, for more than two centuries, and in which most of the powers of Europe have often been implicated.—Vide Rapin l. p. 622. Henault ad An. 1477.

But while Edward thus neglected his interests abroad, he did not fail to exercise his tyranny at home. His brother, the duke of Clarence, who had assisted him in recovering the crown, had been for some time treated with indifference and disrespect. Clarence thought his services merited a different recompense, and, being of a hasty and inconsiderate temper, often indulged himself in the liberty of invective in the king's absence. The duke of Gloucester, who is supposed even at this time to have formed the design of seizing the crown after Edward's death, and who knew it to be impracticable while his elder brother was alive, endeavoured to render him odious to the king, to whom he represented him as a secret enemy, who was privately labouring to supplant his children.* Tyrants are always jealous: the spirit of the times and the enormities which had been so frequent, in this and the preceding reign, rendered every suspicion admissible: Edward readily listened to the insinuations of Gloucester, which were seconded by the queen, who had conceived an aversion for Clarence. While such was the posture of affairs the

* If the duke of Gloucester had already formed this design the prospect must have been distant, as the king was but thirty-eight years of age.

king happened to kill a favourite deer belonging to Mr. Burdet, a friend of the duke of Clarence. Burdet dropping some hasty expressions against the king, was sentenced to death, and accordingly executed. The duke incensed at the death of his friend, vented his grief and indignation in renewed reproaches against the king his brother. Among other imprudent expressions, he is said to have intimated that Edward was a bastard, and consequently had no right to the crown. Nothing could be more agreeable to the desires of his enemies than to see him thus run into a snare. They so exasperated the king against him that, unmindful of the ties of kindred or the debt of gratitude, he caused him to be arraigned before the parliament.* His trial was conducted with a precipitancy that evinced a determination to find him guilty: he was condemned to death, and the sentence was almost immediately executed by drowning him in a butt of Malmsey.

Edward having spent a great part of his life amidst the alarms and the dangers of war, now abandoned himself to voluptuousness, and seemed resolved to pass the residue

* Stowe p. 430.—Dugdale thinks that he was not arraigned before parliament till after his execution.—Vide Dugd. Baron. 2. p. 164.

of his days in effeminate ease. But his luxurious pleasures emptied his coffers, which he endeavoured to fill by various modes of exaction, and frequently caused men of opulence to be accused of treason in order to confiscate their estates or extort large sums for their pardon. While Edward thus revelled in luxury and oppressed his subjects by his tyranny, Louis XI. carried on a successful war against Maximillian, of Austria, who had married the heiress of Burgundy. The great aim of his policy was to prevent the king of England from taking a part in the quarrel. A new treaty was therefore concluded between Louis and Edward.* The truce and alliance were prolonged for the period of a hundred years, and the marriage contract between the Dauphin and the princess Elizabeth was to be fulfilled without delay. Louis, however, found various excuses for deferring the performance of his promise in regard to the marriage; and while he was thus amusing Edward, an accident happened which totally changed the state of affairs.

Maria, duchess of Burgundy, being killed by a fall from her horse, in March, 1481, her

* M. Le Pres. Henault considers this treaty as a piece of consummate policy in Louis. Vide his remarks *ab. chron. ad an. 1478.*

consort, the archduke Maximillian had so little authority over the Flemings, that he was obliged to resign his children into the hands of the citizens of Gaunt. Louis exerted all his policy to inspire the Gantois with a dread of the power of the house of Austria, and managed so dextrously that he obtained their consent to give to the Dauphin, his son, Margaret, the daughter of their deceased duchess, with the provinces of Artois, Burgundy, Maçonnois, Auxerre, and Charallois. The treaty was concluded with such secrecy that the first intelligence of it did not reach England till after the arrival of the Dauphiness at Paris, in April, 1482. She was then only two years old, and the nuptials were celebrated in July. This was a great disappointment and a most outrageous affront to Edward, who had caused his daughter to be stiled *Madame la Dauphinesse*. The desire of revenge roused him from the lethargy into which he had been lulled by voluptuousness. Louis, in order to find him employment, involved him in a quarrel with Scotland; but this war, which was successfully conducted by the duke of Gloucester, was only of short continuance; and after its termination Edward resolved on the invasion of France. The mention of the conquest of France revived the

romantic expectations of the English: the parliament, which was only the minister of the king's will, encouraged the attempt, at a moment when it could not possibly succeed: the lords unanimously declared the war to be just and necessary; and such is the folly of nations, that the people rejoiced as if they had already obtained the victory.* But amidst his preparations for this important enterprise, Edward was seized with a fever, of which he died in the forty-second year of his age, a month after having completed the twenty-second of his reign.

The person as well as the character of Edward has been carefully described by historians. It has been universally acknowledged that before he grew bloated and corpulent, he was the handsomest man in England, or perhaps in all Europe. His countenance was equally sweet and majestic, and his free and easy air, with the affability of his manners, prepossessed every one in his favour. The quality that chiefly distinguished his character was a dauntless courage, which gained him the esteem and affection of the people, and was extremely serviceable to him

* Rapin 1. p. 627.

in various circumstances of his life. He also appears to have been perfectly skilled in the military art, so far as it was known in that age; and in every battle that he fought he had the good fortune to be victorious. His genius was far from being contemptible, and his judgment was solid. The confidence which he placed in persons sold to France, and the facility with which he was repeatedly deceived by Louis XI. seem to impeach his prudence; but the wisest prince cannot always guard against corrupt ministers, and Louis was the most crafty politician of the age. Some historians have concisely described his qualities and character as consisting of beauty and courage, in conjunction with every vice that degrades human nature. But the portrait appears to be somewhat distorted. The crimes with which he is principally charged, are cruelty, perjury, and incontinence. But his cruelty may be considered as the vice of the times, and, in some measure, excuseable by circumstances. A great number of princes and lords whom he took prisoners, were put to death on the scaffold; but it must be observed that had Edward fallen into the hands of his enemies, he would have experienced a similar fate, as in these disastrous civil wars, neither party shewed

any mercy. Of the charge of perjury, he cannot be exculpated even by those who are most favourable to his reputation. Several instances of his breach of faith are found in his history. But few statesmen are famous for their adherence to treaties, or observance of oaths. Perfidy, indeed, is too often excused by reasons of state—weak arguments when opposed to the dictates of honour and religion. In regard to the charge of incontinence, his whole life was a scene of licentious amours; but he shewed in his behaviour to his consort, the queen, that his heart was not wholly depraved: although unfaithful to her bed, he treated her with a constant and tender affection, and even carried his indulgence so far, as to allow her an undue influence in the state. Edward affected a great veneration for religion, and ascribed all his victories to the favour of heaven. Notwithstanding his severity to the rest of his enemies, he pardoned several bishops who had declared for the opposite party. But if we place his morals in contrast with his religion, we shall be ready to conclude that his zeal for the church, and his favours to the clergy, were dictated by policy rather than piety. The good fortune of this prince appears almost miraculous. He was raised

to the throne after the loss of two battles, one by his father, the duke of York, the other by the earl of Warwick. And the head of the father remained still exposed on the walls of York, when the son was proclaimed king in London. In all the subsequent vicissitudes of his life, fortunate coincidences concurred with his courage and military talents to extricate him from his difficulties.

A reign so turbulent as that of Edward IV. could not be propitious to the arts of peace or the civilization of the people. The commercial interests of the nation were not, however, wholly forgotten. We read of an act prohibiting the importation of foreign cloth, and of treaties of commerce concluded between England and the low countries.* But a reign, of which so great a part was spent in civil wars, could not be favourable either to trade, agriculture, or letters. The manners of the court give the *ton* to those of the people. The king would at once gallant a mistress and inspect an execution; and the same palace which one day smoked with blood, was on the following day the scene of a ball or a masquerade. A spirit of gallantry, mixed with cruelty, reigned in

* Stat. 4. Edward IV. Rym. Fœd. Tom. 12. p. 66, &c.

the court, and seems to have been the distinguishing feature of these times of civil discord, in which enormous crimes were so common that lewdness might well be regarded as a trivial vice. The lower orders, inured to scenes of blood and cruelty, were become unfeeling and ferocious; and the facility with which armies were raised by both parties on every occasion, shews the martial disposition as well as the madness of the people, who were ever ready to take arms in a quarrel with which they had no concern, and to sacrifice their lives for the interests of the weakest or the most worthless of mankind. Yet these calamitous scenes were ultimately beneficial: the dissensions of the great constantly obliged them to appeal to the inferior classes for their assistance in deciding the contest; and while the aristocracy was weakened by bloody battles and barbarous executions, the people were proportionably rising to power and influence.

EDWARD V.

EDWARD IV. left two sons, the eldest of whom being only twelve years of age, was proclaimed king by the name of **Edward V.** His reign was short and unfortunate, and its history has no other subject than the dark plots and intrigues of his uncle, the duke of Gloucester, to deprive him of his crown. The victories of Edward IV. had established the house of York on the ruins of that of Lancaster; and the latter being completely depressed and nearly annihilated, no further danger was apprehended from that quarter. Factions, however, still subsisted in the court; and parties divided the aristocracy. The queen, who had been fortuitously raised to a station to which neither her birth nor her fortune gave her any pretensions, seemed willing to hide* the obscurity of her former condition among a number of new promotions. By her agree-

* Rapin 1. p. 629.

able temper and artful conduct, she had gained an entire ascendancy over her consort, and an almost unlimited influence in public affairs. Though Edward was so frequently unfaithful to her bed, he was never exposed to her reproaches; and he repaid her moderation and patience with every kind of condescension. The queen carefully improved these advantages. Her father, her brother, and her sons by her former husband, were honoured with titles and enriched by lucrative offices; and numbers of peers were created who could have had no pretensions to that rank had they not been supported by her favour. This occasioned a distinction between the ancient and the new nobility; and if the latter were accounted less honourable, this defect was amply compensated by the places of trust and emolument procured for them by the queen. By degrees, she had almost banished the ancient nobility from the court, where scarcely any were seen but lords of the new creation, attached to her interests; and throughout the whole kingdom the most considerable posts were filled by her creatures. The aim of the queen was not only to preserve her ascendancy during the life of the king, but also, in case of his death, to secure for herself the government of the king-

dom in the name of her son. But by a fatality, very common to political projects, the schemes which she had laid for securing her authority, occasioned the ruin of herself and her family.

The queen having declared against the ancient nobility, it is easy to conceive that they would take the first opportunity of opposing her power. Edward had seen, with some concern, the two parties which were formed in his court; but his affection for the queen prevented him from guarding against the consequences. Besides he did not expect to be cut off in the flower of his age, and so long as he remained in health, he did not doubt that, during his life, his steady and vigorous hand would be able to hold the balance, and that by strengthening the new nobility, he should deprive the ancient barons of the power of disturbing his children after his death. But when he saw his dissolution approaching, he contemplated the division in a different light. He considered that he left for the support of his house only new families, whose authority was not established by time and prescription, and whose credit and influence were wholly derived from his favour, an advantage of which they were going to be deprived by his death. Troubled at the

Buckingham and Hastings, he seized the earl of Rivers, the queen's brother, with the lord Grey and the marquis of Dorset, her sons by her first husband, and sent them prisoners to Pontefract castle, in Yorkshire. This violent proceeding gave to the queen just cause of alarm. She began to suspect that the duke of Gloucester meditated designs destructive to the royal family; and in order to avoid the impending danger, she, with the king's brother, the duke of York, and the rest of her children, took refuge in Westminster abbey. The duke of Gloucester, in the mean while, spared neither dissimulation, nor artifice, nor oaths, to procure for himself the custody of the king's person, and the government of the realm during his minority. A great council was called, consisting of his friends and the chiefs of the ancient nobility; and this assembly, usurping a privilege which belonged only to the Parliament, declared Richard, duke of Gloucester, protector of the king as well as of the kingdom.

Richard thus became master of the king's person; but, in order to accomplish his designs, it was necessary to have also in his power the duke of York, brother of the monarch, and the next heir to the crown. This young prince, only seven years of age, being

with his mother in the sanctuary of Westminster, the cardinal archbishop of Canterbury was employed to prevail on the dowager queen to deliver her son into his hands. But the eloquence of the prelate could not remove the fears of that princess, who too clearly perceived the ruin that menaced her family. She did not conceal her suspicions that the duke of Gloucester had formed designs which he could not execute without having both the brothers in his power; and she declared her decided opinion that the only means of preserving the king, was to keep the duke of York out of the reach of their uncle. The cardinal, who did not suspect the protector's design, assured her that all her apprehensions were groundless. His arguments and assertions, however, were far from convincing the queen. But the prelate having informed her that the council, at the instigation of the protector and the duke of Buckingham, had resolved to force the young prince from the sanctuary, in case that she remained obstinate; the queen, after clasping her child to her breast, delivered him up with a shower of tears. The cardinal brought him to the duke of Gloucester, who took him in his arms, and kissing him with feigned affection, said "Welcome, my lord, with all

“my heart;” adding, that while he himself was alive, he should never want a father. He was then brought to the young king, who rejoiced to have his brother for a companion ; but alas! the two royal youths did not consider the fatal intention of these pleasing preparations. A few days after, the duke of Gloucester, under some pretext, conveyed them both to the Tower.

Historians suppose that the protector had not communicated to the duke of Buckingham his treacherous scheme, until he had the two princes in his power. However this may be, the duke being a man of profligate principles, it was easy to engage him in the plot by the promise of reward. The protector and his friends now formed the plan on which they were gradually to proceed. In the first place it was resolved to dispatch the prisoners in Pontefract castle, in order to deprive the royal family of their support. This design was imparted to Lord Hastings, who approved the measure, but was ignorant of the real motive. Sir Richard Ratcliffe, governor of Pontefract, having received orders for that purpose, beheaded the lords committed to his custody. The protector next applied himself to gain Sir Edmund Shaw, mayor of London, and succeeded to his wish. The

mayor engaged in the plot his brother John Shaw, a celebrated preacher, and Pinker, a monk, both of whom were highly esteemed by the people. To these the protector joined a profligate wretch of the name of Catesby, a confidential friend of Lord Hastings.* A number of emissaries were now employed to spread among the people a report of the illegitimacy of the children of the late king. Three princes and six princesses, the posterity of Edward IV. and of the late duke of Clarence, stood between the protector and the throne. But he and his iniquitous council devised an expedient to annihilate their rights: this was to intimate that his own mother was an adulteress, and that his brothers, Edward IV. and the duke of Clarence, were not the real sons of the late duke of York. Unprincipled agents were employed to disseminate these reports; and some servants of the late duke of York were suborned to declare, that the duchess, his spouse, had taken to her bed men whom Edward IV. and the duke of Clarence perfectly resembled in feature and countenance, and that the duke of Gloucester alone was his real son and legitimate heir.

The pictures which impartial history is obliged to exhibit, are too often disgusting to

the eye of religion and humanity. These sentiments, indeed, seldom enter the labyrinth of political intrigue. But never did the crimes of a court appear in blacker colours than those which throw a gloomy shade over the short and unhappy reign of Edward V. The duke of Gloucester, pretended to prepare for the coronation of the young monarch, but constantly found some excuse for delaying the performance of the ceremony. In the mean while, as he knew that lord Hastings had a very great influence over the people of London, he considered him as able either to facilitate or impede the execution of his designs, and therefore resolved either to gain him, or to effect his destruction. Catesby, his treacherous friend, was chosen to sound him on the subject of the projected usurpation. Hastings appeared immoveable in his adherence to the king; and Richard therefore resolved on his death.

In order to carry his design into execution, the protector called a council in the Tower, under the pretext of completing the arrangements for the king's coronation. At nine o'clock in the morning, he came thither with a cheerful countenance, saluting the members with the greatest affability, and with the appearance of unusual

June 13th,
A. D. 1483.

good humour: then going out, he desired that his absence might not interrupt their deliberations. In about an hour he returned, with an entire alteration in his looks, knitting his brows, biting his lips, and shewing every sign of an inward perturbation. Remaining some time without speaking, he at length expressed himself in these words: "My lords, what punishment do they deserve who have conspired against my life." Lord Hastings replied, "Whoever is guilty of such a crime ought to be punished as a traitor." After a short pause, the protector, with a stern countenance, unbuttoned his left sleeve, and shewed the council his arm, which was dried and withered, saying with extreme emotion, "See what that sorceress the queen, my sister-in-law, and Shore's wife, have done by their witchcraft. They have reduced my arm as you see, and my whole body would have been in the same state, if, by God's mercy, their infamous plot had not been discovered." At these words the members of the council were struck with astonishment, as they knew that his arm had been long in that state. For some time all were silent, till lord Hastings said, that "if they had committed such a crime they deserved punishment." The protector then

raising his voice, cried "What, dost thou answer me with ifs? I tell thee that they have conspired my death; and that thou, traitor, art the accomplice of their crime." He then struck the table twice with his hand, and the room was instantly filled with armed men. As soon as they were entered, the protector turning to lord Hastings, said, "I arrest thee for high treason." Who, me, "my lord," answered Hastings. "Yes, thee, traitor," replied the protector, and immediately ordered the soldiers to take him into custody.*

The council room was now filled with tumult; and, although no rescue was attempted, the soldiers caused a bustle, as if they apprehended some danger. One of them was very near cleaving the head of lord Stanley with his battle-axe; but that nobleman dexterously avoided the blow by slipping himself under the table. Lord Stanley was one of the firmest adherents to the young king: he possessed a profound penetration; and the duke of Gloucester, knowing that he had discovered all his designs, had, in all probability, given orders to kill him, as it were by accident, amidst the confusion occasioned by this affair. But this scheme having

* Rapin, l. p. 685.

failed, Stanley was arrested, together with the archbishop of York and the bishop of Ely. As these two prelates were zealously attached to the king, and possessed great influence over the people, the protector resolved to secure their persons, in order to prevent them from opposing his designs. As to lord Hastings, he would scarcely allow him time to make his confession to the first priest that could be procured, swearing that "he would not dine till he saw the head of the traitor struck off." He was therefore beheaded on a log that was found on the green before the Tower chapel, as the time fixed by the protector was too short for erecting a scaffold. It may not be amiss to remark, that this nobleman died on the same day, and at the same hour, in which the lords in Pontefract castle were executed. He had greatly contributed to their destruction; but while he promoted that act of injustice, he was far from apprehending that he himself was so soon to perish by a sentence equally unjust and tyrannical. In attentively observing the alternate success and misfortunes of the wicked, we cannot but frequently perceive the just retributions of providence.

These illegal proceedings, however, required some justification before the great

tribunal of public opinion. A proclamation was accordingly published in London within two hours after lord Hastings was executed. The king, in whose name it was issued, was made to say, that the lord Hastings had formed a conspiracy for seizing his person, and murdering the dukes of Gloucester and Buckingham, and that to prevent the execution of his nefarious design, he had been obliged, by the advice of his council, to inflict immediate punishment on the criminal. A series of other charges were exhibited against him, relative to his conduct during the late reign; and the proclamation expatiated on every particular that could tend to vilify his character, and lessen the esteem in which he was held by the people.*

The celebrated Jane Shore, the concubine of the late king, was in too obscure a station to endanger the protector or impede his designs. Yet as he had accused her of being the accomplice of the queen and lord Hastings, he judged it expedient to bring her to trial. This unhappy woman, whose misfortunes have been commemorated by Shakspeare's muse, as well as by Moor's historical pen, had been formerly deluded from her husband, a goldsmith, in Lombard-street,

* Moor, p. 492 to 495.

and had lived with Edward IV. the most guiltless mistress in his luxurious and profligate court. Charitable, humane, and generous, she always interceded for the distressed, and was ever applied to as a mediator for mercy. Her intercession in favour of the unfortunate was seldom rejected by Edward, who was not less delighted with the charms of her conversation than with her beauty; and both together are said to have been irresistible. After the decease of that monarch, she lived in privacy; and a person of so inoffensive a character, in so humble a station, could not give the protector any cause of apprehension. But her prosecution seemed necessary to prevent the death of lord Hastings from being considered as an act of injustice; and, perhaps, he might think, that by punishing lewdness, he should impress on the minds of the people an exalted idea of his own religion and morals. On being examined before the council as a sorceress and an accomplice of lord Hastings, she fully exculpated herself of these charges. But being found blameless in every other respect, the protector ordered her to be tried for adultery. On this head her guilt was too notorious to be denied, and she was condemned by the ecclesiastical court to do penance in St. Paul's church, in a white

sheet, with a wax taper in her hand, before crowds of spectators.*

The late executions at London and Pontefract, without any legal process, and the imprisonment of the archbishop of York, the bishop of Ely, and the lord Stanley, left no room to question the protector's intentions. Every one saw that these measures must end in the destruction of the king; but such was the general consternation, that few people dared to discover their thoughts. Those who would have been the most able to oppose the protector, were dead or in prison; and if there were any yet left that might have been willing to check his ambition, the terrible example of those who had fallen the victims of his cruelty was sufficient to cause them to act with circumspection.

The kingdom being thrown into a lethargic apathy by the general consternation, Richard laid aside the mysterious veil under which he had hitherto concealed his designs, and openly aspired to the crown. Terror had seized the great men, and from that quarter he had no apprehensions of meeting with any opposition. But one difficulty was yet to be surmounted: this was to obtain the consent of the Londoners to the projected revolution.

* Moor, p. 496.

Such an undertaking required some political manœuvre. Individuals may be easily corrupted, or if found incorruptible, may be removed out of the way like lord Hastings and the noblemen executed at Pontefract. But to direct the public mind requires other methods, which crafty statesmen well understand. Of all kinds of political manœuvres, those which appear to be connected with religion, and sanctioned by its authority, are the most efficacious. "*Corruptio optimi fit pessima*,"* is an axiom of natural philosophy which may, with equal propriety, be applied to ethics. Religion was given to man by his maker for the best of all possible purposes; but it has too often been converted into an engine of power and policy. When, indeed, we consider the influence which it has ever had, and must ever have over the mind of man, we ought not to wonder that crafty profligates should regard an ostensible veneration for its dictates and its forms, as the most effectual means of deceiving the world. The reports of the illegitimacy of Edward IV. and the late duke of Clarence, had already produced a considerable degree of agitation among the people; and it was therefore resolved that these rumours should

* "The corruption of the best thing renders it the worst."

be supported by a sermon of Dr. Shaw, whose eloquence was admired by the whole city.

This plan being formed, the doctor ascended the pulpit at St. Paul's cross, and preached from these words in the wisdom of Solomon, "Bastard slips shall take no deep root." He began his sermon with shewing the blessings which heaven usually bestowed on a legitimate progeny, and the calamities which fall on the offspring of adultery, ransacking both sacred and profane history for examples to support his argument. He next enlarged on the noble qualities of the duke of York, who was killed at the battle of Wakefield, and shewed how happy England might have been under a sovereign of the race of that illustrious prince. He then hinted his fears that the reign of Edward V. would be fatal to the kingdom, by reason of his spurious descent, and laboured to prove that neither Edward IV. nor the late duke of Clarence were the sons of the great duke of York, asserting that the contrary could be proved by the officers of his household, who were witnesses of the scandalous life of the duchess his consort. From thence he inferred that the real posterity of that prince, the illustrious descendant of Edward III. was not to be looked for in the offspring of Edward IV. or the duke of

Clarence, and that their race would infallibly perish; because, said he, repeating the words of his text, "Bastard slips shall take no deep root." "But my lord, the protector," continued he, raising his voice, "that noble prince, the "pattern of every virtue, carries in his countenance, in his air, in his carriage, in his "soul, the perfect image of his illustrious "father." At these words it was designed that the duke of Gloucester should enter, in the expectation that the people, moved by the eloquence of the preacher, would salute him king. The duke delayed his coming a few moments too long; but as soon as the holy sycophant saw him appear, he repeated the same words. Instead, however, of hearing the cry of "Long live king Richard," as both the duke and the preacher expected, they could readily perceive, from the sullen silence of the people, that the tenor of the sermon did not meet the public approbation.

But the protector was determined to carry his point, and, indeed, he had gone too far to recede. The lord mayor was ordered to convene the aldermen, common council, and principal citizens; and the duke of Buckingham, who was an eloquent speaker, undertook to harangue the assembly. He expatiated on the calamities of the late reign

and the illegitimacy of the king : he recapitulated the heads of Dr. Shaw's sermon, and added a variety of arguments to those adduced by that preacher. He inveighed, with vehemence, against the cruelty, avarice, and incontinence of Edward IV. and aggravated his vices in order to render his memory odious. He intimated to the assembly that the lords of the council and the commons of the realm had declared that a bastard should not sit on the throne of England, but that the crown should be adjudged to the duke of Gloucester. He expressed his apprehension that the magnanimous protector would refuse the offer, but hoped that all the people, especially the citizens of London, uniting with one accord, might prevail on him to undertake the burden of royalty, and concluded by desiring his auditory to declare freely their sentiments. The citizens, surprised at this unjust proposal, were silent ; and the duke, imagining that he had not been well understood, raised his voice, and repeated the sense of his harangue in other words, with a gracefulness and eloquence worthy of a better subject. But the people still remained silent, till some of the duke's servants, who had slipped in among the crowd, cried out " Long live king Richard." The cry was seconded by some of the citizens,

who had been previously bribed; and the rabble, collected at the door, following their example, threw up their caps, and shouted "king Richard, king Richard." Although the duke of Buckingham perceived that these acclamations came from the mob and not from the respectable citizens, he took advantage of the circumstance, and declaring his joy at seeing so unanimous an approbation of his proposal, he requested them to accompany him the next day to petition the protector to accept of the crown.


On the following day, the duke of Buckingham, with the mayor and aldermen, and many other persons of the cabal, waited on the protector, with an offer of the crown. Richard appeared in the gallery, between two bishops, and, with profound hypocrisy, pretended to be totally ignorant of the matter, and surprised at the concourse. When he was informed that they came to offer him the crown, he declined accepting it, alleging his respect for the late king, his brother, and his tender affection for the children under his care, and declaring that with him these considerations outweighed all the royal diadems in the world. The duke of Buckingham, apparently dissatisfied at his answer, told him that all the people, and especially the

citizens of London, had unanimously resolved on making him king, and that in case of his refusal, they should be obliged to offer the crown where it would meet with a more ready acceptance. On this representation of the resolution of the people, the protector graciously condescended to comply with their request, and addressed them in these terms: "Since I see the whole kingdom resolved not to suffer Edward's children to reign, a circumstance which gives me extreme concern, I am fully convinced that the crown can of right belong only to me, who am the undoubted son of the late duke of York. To this title is now joined the free election of the lords and commons of the realm, which, of all titles, I shall consider as the chief and most effectual. From these considerations, I graciously receive your petition. I therefore, from this moment, take upon me the sovereignty of the two kingdoms of England and France, resolving to govern and defend the one, and by the help of God and the valour of my people, to subdue the other." At the close of his speech was heard a general cry of

June 18th,
A. D. 1483. "Long live king Richard III."

Such was the dark and mysterious train of political machinations by which Edward V.

was, after a reign of only two months and twelve days, hurled from a throne to which his father Edward IV. had waded through oceans of blood. The comedy was here concluded; but it was soon to be succeeded by a horrible tragedy.



RICHARD III.



THE duke of Gloucester having in so extraordinary a manner surmounted all the obstacles that opposed his ambition, was proclaimed king by the name of Richard III. but he deferred his coronation till the arrival of five thousand troops from the north, as he did not entirely confide in the citizens of London. In the mean while he made some promotions, and conferred some titles on persons of noble descent. He released from prison the archbishop of York and lord Stanley, the latter of whom he made lord steward of his household. The honour, conferred on this nobleman, however, was not the effect of affection or

June 20th,
A. D. 1483.

confidence, but was rather extorted by fear. His son, the lord Strange, had already begun to levy troops, and the new king judged it expedient to gain the father in order to prevent the son from raising commotions that might endanger his recently acquired throne. He gave the great seal to the bishop of Lincoln, one of his creatures; but the bishop of Ely, whom he mortally hated, was taken out of the Tower and committed to the custody of the duke of Buckingham, who sent him to the castle of Brecknock, in Wales. At length the troops, expected from the north, being arrived at London, the coronation of the king and queen was performed with great solemnity. All the peers of the realm took care to be present lest their absence should be construed into a mark of disaffection.

July 6th,
A. D. 1483.

Richard had now no other care than that of supporting himself on the throne. Circumstances, indeed, appeared extremely favourable to his views. The Lancastrian family was quite extinct in England. Henry, earl of Richmond, the only remaining branch of that house was in the hands of the duke of Bretagne, who received a pension for keeping him as a prisoner. Margaret, his mother, shewed no inclination to prosecute her claims;

and besides, she was married to lord Stanley, whom Richard had appointed to one of the most considerable offices at court. As to the princes and princesses of Portugal and Castile, descended from Philippa and Catharine of Lancaster, daughters of John of Gaunt, they were too remote to give any disturbance. The queen dowager and her five daughters dared not to stir from their sanctuary. Edward V. and his brother, the duke of York, were in the Tower, where Richard had placed Sir Robert Brackenbury, his creature, as governor. Of the Yorkists attached to the family of Edward IV. some were already dispatched, and others were fled. The civil wars having swept away great numbers of the nobility, and entirely destroyed many ancient families, the power of the aristocracy, which used to be so formidable to the sovereign, was very considerably diminished; and every thing seemed to promise the new monarch a tranquil and prosperous reign.

But mistrust and apprehension always haunt the minds of usurpers and tyrants. Richard did not think his throne firmly established, so long as his two nephews, Edward V. and the duke of York, were alive, and he therefore resolved on their destruction. In order to avoid suspicion by absence, he de-

parted from London to make a progress through the kingdom, under the pretext of reforming certain abuses which were found to be detrimental to the people. From Gloucester, he dispatched an order to Brackenbury, the governor of the Tower, to murder the two young princes. Although the governor was entirely the creature of Richard, yet he had virtue enough to refuse the horrid commission, and submissively answered that he could not imbrue his hands in their blood. A fit instrument, however, was easily found. James Tyrrel was sent by the king, with a written order, empowering him to take the command of the Tower for one night; and Brackenbury, in consequence, delivered to him the keys. That very night, while all were asleep, Tyrrel, with two other assassins, went to the room where the two princes lay, and after smothering them in bed, buried them under the staircase. Notwithstanding the secrecy with which this murder was committed, yet as neither of the princes were ever more heard of after the day that Tyrrel entered the Tower, the public never doubted of their having fallen victims to the cruel policy of the tyrant. Vengeance at length overtook the regicide: he was executed for this fact in the succeeding reign, after confessing his

crime, and the mode of its perpetration.* Thus ended the life of the unfortunate Edward V. it had not been sufficiently long to develope his character; and his reign had been too short to effect any alteration in the social state of the kingdom.

The fears of the tyrant being in a great measure removed by the death of his nephews, he proceeded to York. Sensible of the influence of pageantry and shew on the minds of the people, he resolved to be crowned in that city as he had already been at London; and the ceremony was performed with great solemnity in the cathedral. He also endeavoured to secure the clergy in his interests by every kind of indulgence, as well as by an ostensible veneration and zeal for religion. His next care was to secure his usurpation by foreign alliances. For this purpose he commenced negotiations with Castile and Portugal, with the archduke Maximilian, who governed the Netherlands in the name of Philip, his son, and with France and Bretagne, from whence he apprehended that domestic revolt might derive external support. In all these negotiations, he succeeded according to his wish. Ferdinand and

* Rapin, vol. 1. p. 638.

Isabella, who had united the crowns of Castile and Arragon, having no other object in view than the conquest of the Moorish kingdom of Grenada, were far from desiring to intermeddle in the claims of the houses of York and Lancaster, and gladly renewed the ancient alliance between Castile and England. The king of Portugal adopted with equal facility the same line of conduct. Maximilian was unwilling to involve himself in unnecessary embarrassments.* And France, under a minority, disturbed by intestine divisions, was not in a state to give the new king of England any great cause of apprehension. In short, nothing appeared capable of shaking the blood-stained throne of the usurper.

Divine providence, however, had decreed that he should not long wear a crown obtained by treachery and murder. The danger by which he was first menaced, arose from a quarter from which it had been least expected. The duke of Buckingham, who had been the principal instrument in placing him on the throne, retired in disgust, and resolved to hurl down the tyrant whom his efforts had raised. The

* The king of Portugal, Isabella, queen of Castile, and the archduke Maximilian, were all descendants of the house of Lancaster by Catharine and Philippa, daughters of John of Gaunt, and consequently had pretensions to the crown of England.

cause of this change in the duke has not been ascertained by historians. It has generally been ascribed to Richard's refusal to grant him some lands, to which he pretended a claim; but this appears to be a mistake, and an eminent writer ascribes the conduct of the duke either to an impulse of conscience, or to some neglect of the king in not rewarding him as he expected :* the latter seems rather to have been the case: conscience has little influence on men of his character, and ambitious courtiers seldom think any recompense sufficiently great for their services.

Whatever was the motive by which the duke of Buckingham was actuated, he formed the design of depriving Richard of his crown. It appears to have been at first his desire and intention to place it on his own head; but considering that such an attempt would be opposed by all the adherents of the houses both of York and Lancaster, that is by the whole kingdom which was divided between the two factions, he altered his plan, and resolved to declare for Henry, earl of Richmond, who was then in Bretagne. In concerting with the bishop of Ely the means of accomplishing this design, they both concluded that all hope of

* Vide Dugdale's Barons. vol. 1. p. 168.

success ought to be founded on the marriage of the earl of Richmond with the princess Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Edward IV. and a secret negociation was entered into with the dowager queen for that purpose. The duke, in the mean while, engaged in the plot several persons of great credit and influence in Wales and the western counties, who undertook to enlist soldiers privately, in order to enable him to bring an army suddenly into the field. These arrangements being made, the countess of Richmond sent two expresses by different routes,* to inform her son of the project formed in his favour, and of the measures taken for carrying it into execution. These expresses having reached Henry within an hour of each other, detailed the particulars of the confederacy, and indicated the place that was thought the most proper for his landing.

The earl of Richmond was then in a difficult situation. Though not under strict confinement, the duke of Bretagne had by his treaty with Edward IV. engaged to prevent him from leaving his dominions. If the duke should disapprove of the enterprise, he

* One from Plymouth, the other by way of Kent and Calais.—Hollingshed, 1400.

might make him close prisoner, and a private escape could not answer his purpose, as unless that prince should assist him with money, troops, and ships, he found it impracticable to take measures requisite for accomplishing his design. While difficulties thus presented themselves on every side, Henry resolved to discover the secret to the duke of Bretagne, and, if possible, to engage him in the confederacy. He found the duke more ready to favour his views than he could have expected, and he agreed, on certain conditions, to furnish him with ships and troops. Henry being thus secure of assistance from Bretagne, sent back the expresses to the countess, his mother, and the duke of Buckingham, requesting them to be ready with their forces about the beginning of October.

The conspirators were instantly in motion. Every one repaired to the post assigned him, in order to levy troops and organize the insurrection. These things, however, could not be transacted so secretly as to be concealed from the knowledge of Richard, who was then at York, where he received intelligence that some plot was certainly in agitation, although the authors were unknown. The king immediately suspected the duke of Buckingham, whom he considered not only as

a dissatisfied person, but as the only lord in the kingdom that possessed wealth, credit, and talents, sufficient for the execution of any great project. In order to be convinced of the matter, Richard sent for him to court; but the duke excused himself on the plea of indisposition. This confirmed the suspicions of the king, who, in order to be more fully convinced, sent him positive orders to repair to court, declaring that he could not admit of any excuse or delay. The duke, finding dissimulation of no farther utility, and expecting the speedy arrival of the earl of Richmond, sent the king an open defiance, and immediately collected the troops which he and his friends had privately enlisted in Wales. With these he began his march toward Salisbury, where he was to be joined by those that were ready to take arms in the counties of Cornwall, Somerset, Devon, and Wilts, as well as by the earl of Richmond, who was daily expected to arrive from Bretagne.

Richard, in the meanwhile, having assembled his forces at Leicester, put himself at their head, resolving to give battle to his enemies. But for this time fortune favoured his cause, and rendered his preparations un-

necessary. Buckingham having advanced towards Gloucester, where he intended to pass the Severn, found that river so greatly swoln, that the country on both sides was flooded, and great damage done by the waters. The inundation, which was the greatest ever known in that country, lasted ten days, during which time the duke could neither pass the river nor find subsistence for his army. And the Welsh soldiers, weary of suffering the calamities of hunger, as well as of being exposed to the heavy rains and other hardships, returned home in spite of the earnest intreaties of their commander. Seeing himself thus deserted by his army, without any prospect of safety except in concealment, the duke retired to the house of a man named Bannister, who had been his servant, and had received many favours from him and his family. But the consequences verified the maxim, that there is no friendship among the wicked. The duke of Buckingham having first been false to his legitimate sovereign, and afterwards to Richard, the monarch whom he himself had set up, was little entitled to expect fidelity from others. A reward of one thousand pounds sterling, or a pension of a hundred per ann. was promised

to any one that should deliver up the duke to justice.* Bannister, unable to resist so strong a temptation, betrayed his master to the sheriff of Shropshire, who seized the duke in the dress of a peasant, and conducted him to Shrewsbury, where he was beheaded by the king's order, without any trial.†

While these things were transacting in England, the earl of Richmond sailed from Oct. 12th,
A. D. 1483. St. Maloe, with five thousand troops, embarked on board forty ships, which were furnished by the duke of Bretagne. But his fleet being dispersed by a storm, his own ship alone reached the English coast, where he descried some troops, who, by signals, encouraged him to land. Henry, however, having discovered that they were placed there by Richard for the purpose of decoying him on shore, immediately stood out to sea, and arrived soon after in Normandy.

Richard being now freed from the danger by which he had been menaced, proceeded to extirpate his enemies. Several persons of note had fled into Bretagne: others were seized and sacrificed to his vengeance, among

* Several others were proscribed as well as the duke of Beekingham. Vide Rymer's *Fœd.* Tom. 12. p. 204.

† Rapin, l. p. 641. Hollingshed, p. 1403.

whom was Sir Thomas St. Leger, his brother-in-law; and, in order to expedite these sanguinary measures, he gave to Sir Ralph Ashton an unlimited power to condemn and execute on the spot such as were by him deemed guilty of treason, or even suspected of that crime.* By virtue of this commission, Ashton went into the western counties, where he signalized his zeal for the interest of Richard by a number of bloody executions.

Thus passed the first six months of the reign of Richard III. The authority of parliament was still wanting to give a sanction to his injustice and tyranny. But in these times of general profligacy that was easily procured. The juncture, indeed, was favourable. The duke of Buckingham's conspiracy being apparently crushed by the death of that nobleman and the retreat of the earl of Richmond, there was not a person in the kingdom that dared to resist the royal authority. In this moment of his highest prosperity, Richard summoned a parliament, which January 23d, A. D. 1484, proved all his proceedings, declared the children of Edward IV. illegitimate, passed an act of attainder against the earl of Richmond and all his adherents, and

* Vide Rymer's Fœd. Tom. 12. p. 205.

on the whole appeared as much disposed to slavery as the king was to tyranny. The destruction of his rival, however, was still wanting to complete his security. To effect this, he sent an embassy to the duke of Bretagne, seemingly on public business, but in reality to treat with Landais, the prime minister of that prince, in order to induce him to deliver up the earl of Richmond. The duke at that time labouring under an indisposition which rendered him incapable of governing, Landais exercised without control the sovereign authority; and that unprincipled minister being bribed by Richard, had the baseness to agree to the proposal. But the earl, having timely notice, fled into France, and had only just time to pass the frontier before he was overtaken by his pursuers.* The duke was greatly incensed at the conduct of his minister, and generously permitted the English malecontents who had taken refuge in Bretagne to follow the earl into France.

Richard being thus baffled in his design of seizing the person of his rival, redoubled his

* The preservation of the earl of Richmond was almost miraculous. The duke of Bretagne had once been prevailed on to deliver him and the earl of Pembroke into the hands of the ambassadors of Edward IV. but repenting of his compliance, sent for them back at the moment they were entering the vessel that was to carry them to England.—Hall. p. 277.

precautions for frustrating the attempts which he might yet be enabled to make. He knew that he was not beloved by his subjects, and considering his power as precarious, he grew every day more suspicious and cruel. Lord Stanley being the husband of the countess of Richmond, was one of the chief objects of his suspicion; and, in order to secure his fidelity, Richard obliged him to deliver up his son as an hostage. His spies, who were placed in every part of the country, informed him of certain movements among the people which indicated some mischief; but all their vigilance could not discover the particulars of the plot, nor who were the principal persons concerned. At length he found that the projects in favour of the earl of Richmond, were founded on his intended marriage with the daughter of Edward IV. and heiress of the house of Lancaster. This discovery led him to perceive that the Yorkists and the Lancastrians were about forming an union, which could not but end in the subversion of his throne. The only expedient that Richard could devise for rendering this project abortive, was to espouse the princess, his niece, to prevent her marriage with his enemy. But one great obstacle stood in his way, which he found means to remove. He had already a

wife, the widow of the prince of Wales, whom he himself had cruelly butchered after the battle of Tewksbury. Allured by ambition, she had given her hand to the murderer of her husband; but her ingratitude to the deceased prince was punished by the inhumanity of him whom she had substituted in his place. Richard is said to have treated her with so much contempt, that she died of grief, according to his desire; but this is one of the secret articles in the black catalogue of political crimes, of which historians are unable to give any authentic account. It is certain that the death of the queen happened at the critical juncture, which exactly coincided with the king's expectation and desire.

Richard, with his usual hypocrisy, endeavoured to demonstrate an extraordinary sorrow for his loss, and ordered the obsequies of his queen to be performed with great pomp and solemnity. His feigned grief, however, had not the desired effect in deceiving the people, who accused him of murdering his queen, as he had murdered his nephews. But whatever was his guilt in this respect, it did not procure him the advantages which he expected. Previously to the death of his consort, he had carried on a negociation with the queen dowager, who had agreed to the projected

marriage. That princess was weary of being confined to her sanctuary; and since the failure of the duke of Buckingham's conspiracy, she regarded the cause of the earl of Richmond as hopeless. Her rejection of Richard's proposal could only prepare a more rigorous fate for herself and her daughters; but her compliance promised to open to them and her brothers a road to riches and honours. But above all, the king being left childless by the death of his son, the prince of Wales, the union proposed afforded to the queen the hope of seeing the crown transmitted to her posterity. From these considerations, the widow of Edward IV. consented to marry her daughter to the murderer of her sons, and to forget all the injuries which her family had received from the tyrant. Historians pretend that the young princess was not equally compliant, and that she treated his proposal with the contempt which it merited. This, however, is uncertain, as it is highly improbable that, in her circumstances, she would publish to the world her aversion.* But as she was

* Rapin observes that every disgraceful story of the princess of the house of York, related by historians who wrote in the reigns of Henry VII. and Henry VIII. ought not to be implicitly believed. *Rapin* i. p. 615 and 627, and this circumstance must, from its nature, be involved in uncertainty.

afterwards married to Henry VII. the affair could scarcely be otherwise related.

The assertions of historians are left in uncertainty by events which soon put an end to the project. While Richard was endeavouring to strengthen his throne by a marriage with his niece, the earl of Richmond having, by earnest solicitation, obtained from Charles VIII. king of France, a body of two thousand men, sailed with that feeble force to conquer the kingdom of England. Expecting to meet with assistance in Wales, he steered for Milford haven, where he arrived in safety, and was joyfully received August 6th, A. D. 1485. by a number of his friends. From this place he immediately began his march towards London; but as he could not pass the Severn without being in possession of some town on that river, he was under the necessity of crossing almost all Wales, in order to reach Shrewsbury, where he was assured he should be readily received. Being joined by several of his friends, his army was augmented to between five and six thousand men; and the whole country supplying him liberally with necessaries, he arrived in a few days at Shrewsbury, where he was received without opposition. Lord Stanley had assured his son-in-law, that he would assist him at a convenient

opportunity ; but as his own son was an hostage, could not openly declare in his favour. Pretending, therefore, to act for the king, he raised a body of five thousand men, as if for his service, and his brother, Sir William Stanley, collected two thousand under the same pretext.

The king, in the mean while, assembled his forces at Nottingham, where he heard that his rival was directing his march towards London, and that his army daily increased. Prudently judging, that at so important a crisis, any appearance of timidity or hesitation on his part would be fatal to his cause, he resolved to bring the affair to a speedy decision by a battle. The earl of Richmond, notwithstanding the inferiority of his force, was equally desirous to engage, as he relied on being joined by Lord Stanley and his brother at the last crisis. Having advanced as far as Litchfield, he went privately to Stafford, where he had an interview with Sir William Stanley, in which were concerted the measures that decided the contest. The king and the earl of Richmond continuing to advance, the two hostile armies met about three miles from Bosworth, in Leicestershire, a place rendered famous by the battle which finally decided the quarrel between the two contending houses of York and Lancaster.

Richard drew up his army, consisting of between twelve and thirteen thousand men, in order of battle. He gave the command of the vanguard to the duke of Norfolk, and led the main body himself, with the crown on his head, apparently to encourage his soldiers, by reminding them that they fought for their king. The earl of Richmond's army amounted to only five thousand men. It was drawn up in two lines, of which the earl of Oxford commanded the first, and the earl of Richmond himself the second. While the two rivals were thus preparing for battle, Lord Stanley and his brother, who had just arrived, the former from Atherstone, and the latter from Stafford, posted themselves opposite against each other, fronting the space between the two armies. This position strengthened the suspicion which Richard had conceived of Lord Stanley's fidelity. But, in order to be more fully convinced, he sent him positive orders to join the line. Lord Stanley returned for answer, that he should join him as soon as he could see it convenient. This ambiguous answer having fully convinced Richard of the justness of his suspicions, he gave orders for putting the son of that nobleman to death. But his generals represented the action as too rash, and advised him rather to wait the issue, especially as in the present circumstances

the death of the young lord could not procure him any advantage.

August 22d,
A. D. 1485. The battle commenced with a shower of arrows, after which the royal army moved forwards to engage in close fight. At this moment, lord Stanley joined the earl of Richmond. Richard spurred up his horse into the thickest of the battle, while the earl, on his part, quitting his station in the second line, posted himself in the front, in order to encourage his troops by his presence. Richard being desirous of ending the dispute by one blow, rushed furiously to attack his rival. In an instant he slew Sir William Brandon, the earl's standard bearer. Sir John Cheney having taken Brandon's place, was, in opposing the furious efforts of the king, thrown to the ground. The earl of Richmond, without advancing, stood firm to receive the attack; but a crowd of his soldiers, interposing, prevented a personal combat between the two rivals. At the same moment, Sir W. Stanley following the example of his brother, joined the first line of the earl of Richmond, which was beginning to give way, but being thus seasonably reinforced, vigorously repulsed the king's troops. This unexpected turn, at so critical a moment, decided the contest. Richard, perceiving his army

every where yielding or flying, and finding that all was lost, rushed into the midst of his enemies, and soon fell covered with wounds. Thus perished the usurper, at about thirty-three or thirty-four years of age, after having worn no more than two years and two months his ensanguined crown.

The battle and pursuit lasted only two hours; and, as the greatest part of the king's army fled without fighting, the carnage was not very considerable. On the king's side, the number of slain amounted to about two thousand men, among whom was the duke of Norfolk, who fell valiantly fighting by the side of the king, besides many other persons of distinction. The earl of Richmond lost not above a hundred, of whom the only person of note was Sir William Brandon. Richard's crown being found on the field of battle, was brought to lord Stanley, who immediately placed it on the head of the earl of Richmond, and saluted him king. The body of Richard being found among the slain, and covered with blood and dirt, was in that condition thrown across a horse, and carried to Leicester, where, after lying two days exposed to public view, it was buried without ceremony in St. Mary's church, belonging to a monastery of grey friars in that city.

Richard was deformed in shape, being crook-backed, and having his left arm dried and withered. If we may credit historians, the deformity of his soul exceeded even that of his body. But it must be observed, that those who wrote in the succeeding reigns of Henry VII. and Henry VIII. have betrayed a studied design of painting his character in the blackest colours. His radical vice was a boundless ambition, which led him to crimes of the deepest dye; and the generality of historians have laboured to prove that their enormity was not diminished by a contrast with any good actions or qualities. His usurpation of the crown, and his murder of his nephews, are deeds, which although far from being unexampled, are shocking to humanity. But lord Verulam, the first English historian, who appears to have been solicitous to do justice to the character of this monarch, says, that he possessed great abilities both for war and government. It is evident from the history of his reign, that his judgment was solid and his penetration acute. His measures, however criminal, were almost always judiciously planned; and, on several occasions, but especially in the battle in which he was slain, he displayed an extraordinary valour. He was also a good legislator, and caused

justice to be impartially administered to all his subjects, without distinction. From his care to check immorality, and to promote sobriety and virtue, as proved by his circular letters to the bishops, it appears that he possessed many of the essential qualifications of a good king. The unprincipled and cruel manner in which he obtained and endeavoured to preserve his crown, is that alone which drew upon him the detestation of his contemporaries, and exposed his name to the reprobation of posterity. While any sentiments of justice, religion, or humanity exist upon earth, a conduct like his can never meet with the approbation of any people. The disaffection of the English to the government of Richard, was the only basis on which the earl of Richmond could found any hope of success. Had he not been well informed of the state of the public mind, it must have been the very height of madness to attempt the conquest of England with so slender a band as two thousand foreigners. But the event clearly proved how greatly the English abhorred the yoke of the usurper. His short and turbulent reign, filled with plots and conspiracies, could not operate any great change in the state of the nation. But the character and the crimes of Richard III. have furnished an

ample subject to the tragic poet, as well as to the historian.



HENRY VII.



ON the bloody field of Bosworth, where the death of king Richard terminated the fatal contest between the two roses,* the earl of Richmond, as soon as the battle was ended, caused "*Te Deum*" to be sung, and all his troops falling on their knees, returned thanks to God for the victory. No sooner was this solemn act of thanksgiving performed, than the whole army made the air resound with the cry of "Long live king Henry." Thus, Henry acquired the crown by a kind of military election. His hereditary claim, indeed, was extremely disputable. The crown had been alternately adjudged by the parliament to each of the contending houses; but the house of York was the elder branch; and Henry was descended from a bastard branch of the house of Lancaster. The grand object

* The arms of the house of York was a red rose, those of the house of Lancaster a white rose.

of his policy was to unite the claims of the two houses, by espousing the princess Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Edward IV. but lest he should seem to found his pretensions on that alliance, he resolved to postpone the marriage till his own title should be confirmed by parliament. But he did not wait the decision of that assembly to authorise his coronation, which was performed with Oct. 30th,
A. D. 1485. great solemnity by the archbishop of Canterbury, who made no inquiry into his title; and the same day, Henry instituted a body guard of fifty archers, covering, with an appearance of grandeur and majesty, a precaution which he deemed necessary for his security.*

The parliament being soon after assembled, confirmed the title of the new king, and settled the succession upon his posterity. The next step was to pass acts of attainder against Richard III. and all his principal adherents, some of whom had been killed at Bosworth, and others executed after the battle. The confiscation of their estates brought immense sums into the coffers of the new king, and rendered unnecessary the demand of a subsidy. Having thus enriched himself with the spoils

* This was the first institution of the body guards in England.

of his enemies, he proceeded to reward his friends, and took every measure that prudence could suggest, to establish himself on his newly-acquired throne. The principal of these was his marriage with the princess Elizabeth, which was no sooner solemnized, than he published a general pardon to all who had borne arms for Richard, on condition of their immediate submission. Some of the lords, however, rejected this favourable offer, and attempted to organize a revolt. But the duke of Bedford being sent to oppose the insurgents, lord Lovel, apprehensive of being deserted by his troops, made his escape into Flanders. The two Staffords, Humphrey and Thomas, took refuge in a church, which enjoying no peculiar privileges, was not regarded as a sanctuary sufficient for their protection, and being dragged from their retreat, the elder of the brothers was executed, the younger received a pardon.

One rebellion seemed to be extinguished only to give rise to another. The extreme aversion which Henry entertained for the house of York, led him into measures which can hardly be reconciled with the maxims of a judicious policy. Those who had called him into the kingdom and placed him on the throne, had expected that the titles of the

two houses being united by his marriage with Elizabeth, there would no longer be any distinction between the Yorkists and the Lancastrians, but that all might equally aspire to the royal favour. These hopes were further corroborated by the birth of a prince, named Arthur, in whose person were united the litigious claims of both houses. But it was seen with surprise and concern that the king still regarded the house of York as a rival, and that his jealousy even reached the queen, whose coronation he deferred, lest he should seem to reign by her right. Such a conduct could not fail of exasperating the Yorkists, who were far more numerous than the Lancastrians; and to this cause historians have referred most of the plots and conspiracies that perplexed his reign.*

But historians are not always acquainted with the causes of events, and the motives which actuate the conduct of kings. After the multiplied revolutions which had alternately elevated and depressed the two houses, Henry might probably think that he could not be too mistrustful. It might have been expected that the nation, long agitated by civil wars, would have eagerly grasped the

* Vide Rapin, l. p. 656 and 657.

blessings of peace; but the people were grown so turbulent, that no king nor government could give satisfaction, and their discontents were artfully fomented by persons who expected to derive advantage from the commotions of the state.

A. D. 1486. One male heir of the house of

York yet remained. This was the earl of Warwick, son of the late duke of Clarence, and nephew of Edward IV. He was only fifteen years of age, three of which had been spent in prison.* The name of this harmless and unhappy boy was made an instrument to deceive an ignorant people. A priest of Oxford, named Richard Simon, trained up Lambert Simnel, a baker's son, to personate the young earl of Warwick, whom he greatly resembled in person and countenance. This youth was taught to talk with propriety of the court of Edward IV. and of the lords and ladies by which it was frequented; and his knowledge of all these particulars excited a suspicion that the priest had not been his only instructor. The comedy being arranged, it was resolved to act the first part in Ireland, where the imposture

* He had been imprisoned by Richard III. and was still kept in confinement by Henry.

could not be so readily discovered as in England; and its successful commencement shews that the conspirators had judiciously taken their measures. A report being previously spread that the earl of Warwick had escaped out of the Tower, Simnel no sooner appeared in Ireland than he was received with universal applause. The deputy governor, the earl of Kildare, and his brother the chancellor, both of whom appear to have been in the plot, acknowledged him as their sovereign; and the pretended earl of Warwick was proclaimed in Dublin, king of England and lord of Ireland, by the name of Edward VI.

The news of so unexpected an event gave Henry no small degree of uneasiness. It was evident that the plot was deeply laid; and its execution appeared so far to be skilfully conducted. His suspicions chiefly fell on the queen dowager, his mother-in-law, whom he knew to be extremely intriguing, as well as highly offended, because her daughter had not been crowned. He therefore imagined that she was at the bottom of the affair, and consequently ordered her to be confined in the nunnery of Bermondsey, and her estate to be seized for his use. But, in order to wipe off the aspersion of treason from one to whom he was so nearly allied, he pretended

that she was punished for delivering up her daughter to Richard III. This frivolous pretext, so contrary to that prudent policy by which the measures of Henry were generally characterised, only served to increase the number of his enemies. The people abhorred his ingratitude towards a person who had been one of the chief instruments in placing him on the throne; and this treatment of the queen dowager, for the alleged crime of not having been able or willing to resist the tyranny of the late king, struck terror into the whole body of the nobility. Most of the great families in the kingdom might be considered as guilty of assisting Richard, or of not having sufficiently opposed him, and every one was afraid of being called to account for crimes which had been supposed to be buried in oblivion.

The next care of Henry was to undeceive the people in regard to the impostor, who was attempting to wrest the sceptre from his hand. For this purpose, he caused the earl of Warwick to be shewn in public. The unfortunate youth was conducted in solemn procession from the Tower to St. Paul's, where he was made to converse with those who best knew his person, and where the people, who were assembled in crowds, were

allowed to view him with the greatest attention. The earl was then re-conducted to the Tower, and the people were convinced. But the case was different in Ireland. There it was maintained and universally believed, that the person shewn in London was an impostor, and that the true earl was at Dublin. The king, however, took every measure that prudence could suggest: he proclaimed a general pardon to all who should quit the rebels: he promised great rewards to those who should discover the secrets of the plot, and gave orders for guarding the ports, and preventing the malecontents of England from passing over to join those of Ireland.

Events now began to make it appear that the conspiracy had been long ago planned in England, and that one single priest had not alone formed the project. As soon as the impostor was proclaimed in Ireland, the earl of Lincoln embarked for Flanders, to concert with the duchess dowager of Burgundy the means of accomplishing this difficult undertaking. Since the death of Charles, duke of Burgundy, Margaret of York, his widow, sister of Edward IV. and Richard III. lived in Flanders, where her dower was assigned. She had seen, with extreme concern, the revolution which had raised the house of Lancaster

to the English throne, and resolved to use every means to prevent its establishment. Whether she had any concern in Simnel's plot, before the earl of Lincoln's arrival, is not known; but it is certain that she endeavoured to promote its success. Having consulted with the earl, lord Lovell, and some other English fugitives, she agreed to furnish them with 2000 German troops, under Martin Swart, an officer of distinguished reputation.

A. D. 1487. In the beginning of May, the two

English lords, with their German auxiliaries, arrived at Dublin, where the coronation of the counterfeit king was soon after solemnly performed, in presence of the earl of Kildare, the lord chancellor, and the rest of the great officers.

After the coronation of Simnel, a council was called to consult on the measures that were next to be taken. The principal question was, whether they should stand on the defensive in Ireland, or attack Henry in England, where they expected to meet with a great number of friends. As the object of the conspirators was to dethrone the king, and the Irish and Germans hoped to acquire fortunes in England, it was resolved to carry their arms across the channel; and the earl of Lincoln was appointed commander in chief

of their forces. Soon after they were landed in Lancashire, Sir Thomas Broughton joined them with a small body of English. The earl of Lincoln then began his march towards York, in the expectation of being joined by great numbers of the English; but except those whom Broughton had brought, not a man took arms in his favour. The rebel general finding himself thus disappointed, resolved to come to action as soon as possible, lest his army, which was no more than eight thousand strong, should diminish instead of increase. Changing, therefore, his route, he marched towards Newark, in hopes of making himself master of that place before the arrival of the royal army.

Henry, on the first intelligence of the arrival of the earl of Lincoln with his German forces in Ireland, had assembled his forces at Coventry, and waited in that central position the further movements of the rebels. On hearing of their landing in Lancashire, and of their march towards York, he put his army in motion, and advanced to Nottingham, where he held a council of war. As he had not collected above six thousand men, several of his officers advised him to decline an engagement till the arrival of some troops that were daily expected. Henry, however, was

extremely desirous of speedily crushing the rebellion, and considering delay as dangerous, deemed it expedient to give battle to the earl of Lincoln, before he should receive any accession of strength. His own army being two days afterwards nearly doubled by the arrival of the earl of Shrewsbury, lord Strange, and a great number of knights and gentlemen,* with between five and six thousand troops, he resolved to intercept the enemy, and bring him immediately to action. In this view, he marched with great expedition, and posted himself on the road by which the rebels were to approach Newark. On the same day, the earl of Lincoln advanced to the village of Stoke, where he encamped on the declivity of a hill, and the next morning

June 6th,
A. D. 1497. the two armies drew up in order of battle. The narrow extent of the field greatly diminished the advantage which the king might have derived from his great superiority in numbers, and obliged him to draw up his army in three lines, the first of which, consisting of his best troops, sustained all the efforts of the enemy. The contest was extremely obstinate. The earls of Lincoln and Kildare, and the German

* Lord Bacon, p. 597.

general were slain on the field; and most of the Germans being either killed or wounded, the Irish were obliged to seek safety in flight. No less than four thousand of the rebels, and half of the king's first line, are said to have perished in this sanguinary conflict. The impostor Simnel, and the priest his instructor, were made prisoners. Henry, either through generosity or policy, gave Simnel his life, and conferred on him the office of turnspit in his kitchen; and some time after, he was preferred to the office of falconer, which he enjoyed till his death. The priest was committed to prison, and heard of no more. As for lord Lovel, his fate was unknown. Some say that he was killed, others that he was drowned in swimming the Trent, and some even have affirmed that he spent the residue of his life as a hermit. But it is certain that he was never heard of after the battle.

This affair being ended, the next care of Henry was to bring to trial those who were accused of holding intelligence with the rebels. But on this, as on other occasions, his conduct was actuated by avarice rather than by vengeance; and, as his principal aim was to fill his coffers, he spared the lives of the guilty, but punished them severely by pecuniary fines. Perceiving at length that

his enmity to the house of York, and his injurious treatment to the queen, in not permitting her to be crowned, were the main springs of the national discontent, he resolved, against his inclination, to do her justice, in order to prevent future troubles. Having visited Lincoln and York, and settled all his affairs in the north, he returned to London, where he made a triumphant entry, and the next day went in solemn procession to St. Paul's, where "*Te Deum*" was sung, in thanksgiving for his victory over the rebels. The coronation of the queen was soon after

Nov. 25th, performed with the usual solemnities; but, after being so long delayed, it was considered as a measure originating in fear, and adopted with regret.
A. D. 1487.

From this period, the kingdom enjoyed, during the space of six years, a degree of internal tranquillity to which it had seldom been accustomed; and the king was chiefly occupied in negotiations with the different powers of Europe, exhibiting an intricate series of political intrigue and diplomatic finesse.* In all these transactions, the character of Henry appears in its distinguishing dress of avarice and circumspection. He

* Vide Rapin, l. book 14.

pretended to assist the duke of Bretagne against the French monarch; but his only aim was to obtain money from the parliament, after which he no longer thought of supporting his ally. But his grand expedient for filling his coffers, was to make preparations for the conquest of France. He was far from entertaining a thought of engaging in such an enterprise; but he knew that this scheme for raising money would be promoted by the folly of the nation. To give an ostensible appearance to his plan, he entered into a strict alliance with Maximilian, king of the Romans, and with Ferdinand and Isabella, king and queen of Arragon and Castile, all of whom professed their readiness to join him in subjugating France. Ferdinand only wanted to intimidate Charles VIII. in order to procure a restitution of the Roussillon. Maximilian threatened to carry fire and sword into the heart of France, but was far from being able to execute his menaces. And Henry, whose only aim was to obtain money from his subjects, knew that the defection of his allies would afford him a plausible pretext for abandoning his military projects. He, however, prepared for war with great ostentation. Having assembled the parliament, he communicated to

A. D. 1492.

both houses his determination to exert his utmost endeavours for the recovery of the crown of France, which he called the lawful inheritance of his ancestors. He reminded them of the glorious battles of Cressey, Poitiers, and Agincourt, in each of which a small number of troops had vanquished the strongest armies of France. The parliament took fire as the king had expected, and granted him a very considerable sum, which was levied on the rich by way of benevolence, of which upwards of £9680. were paid by the city of London.* Wild schemes of war and conquest are always promoted by the madness of nations. But Henry was too crafty for the parliament and the people, and never intended to squander his money in hazardous enterprises.

Amidst the preparations for war, Charles sent his ambassadors to London, and Henry sent others to Paris. All that was transacted in these negotiations remained a profound secret; but it is extremely probable that the terms of peace were adjusted before the commencement of the war. But it was necessary to save appearances; and after a long delay, Henry embarked late in the

* Stowe, p. 474.

October 2d, season for Calais, where his whole
 A. D. 1492. army being assembled, amounted to no more than twenty-five thousand infantry and sixteen hundred cavalry, a force extremely inadequate to the conquest of France, which at this time was not rent with factions as it was when invaded by Henry V. but entirely united, and able to resist any attack.

Henry was scarcely arrived at Calais before his ambassadors, who had been sent to the king of the Romans, returned with the intelligence, that Maximilian was wholly unprepared for entering France with an army. Letters arrived at the same time from Spain, importing that Ferdinand had concluded a treaty of peace with the French monarch.* Henry knew all this before, but had so ordered the business, that all these advices should arrive at such a moment, as to furnish a plausible pretext for the peace which he intended to make.† He seemed, however, to be greatly surprised, and immediately entered into a negotiation. In order to save appearances, he invested Boulogne; but had only been

* Charles VIII. restored to Spain, Cordaigne, and Roussillon, without demanding the 300,000 crowns for which these provinces had been mortgaged to Louis XI. *Presid. Henault, Ab. Chron. An. 1493.*

† His account from Rapin is contradicted by M. Le Pres. Henault, who places the treaty between Charles and Ferdinand in the following year. *Vide Hen. ubi supra.*

eight days before that place, when a treaty of peace was concluded. The terms were exactly such as the king of England desired: the king of France was to pay him the arrears of the annual pension granted by Louis XI. to Edward IV. amounting to a hundred and twenty-five thousand crowns, besides other debts which amounted to six hundred and twenty thousand.

Charles was punctual in paying the money according to agreement; and, in imitation of Louis XI. assigned considerable pensions to Henry's principal counsellors.* Thus the king of England terminated the farce according to his wish. He frightened the French monarch into the payment of his debts: he completely duped the English parliament and the whole nation, and filled his coffers with the money both of his enemies and his subjects.

Henry had now every reason to expect a tranquil reign. He was at peace with all his neighbours; and his subjects shewed no disposition to revolt. There was not a prince of the house of York that was in a condition to assert the claims of his family,† nor any

* Bacon, p. 605.

† The earl of Warwick, the only male heir of the house of York, was a prisoner in the Tower,

lord of that party that appeared to possess credit sufficient to excite any commotions. And in the seven years and a half that he had sat on the throne, he had accumulated such large sums of money as none of his predecessors, since William the Conqueror, had ever possessed. But while he seemed to be in the meridian of his prosperity, a storm was gathering in his political horizon, which threatened the subversion of his throne.

Within less than a year after Henry's accession, a report had been spread that Richard, duke of York, second son of Edward IV. had escaped the cruelty of his uncle Richard III. and was still alive. As the people are always ready to listen to marvellous tales, the rumour was rapidly propagated, and obtained no small degree of credit. On this basis, the duchess dowager of Burgundy laid the plan of a conspiracy for wresting the crown of England from the house of Lancaster. Though the affair of Simnel had failed, she attributed its ill success to mismanagement in the execution, rather than to any defect in the plan; and she resolved on a second experiment. After a diligent search, she found a youth who seemed perfectly suitable to her purpose. His name was Perkin Warbeck, son of a Jewish convert of Tournay, who had lived a

long time in London. He was about the same age as the duke of York, and appeared to possess all the qualities requisite for representing the person of that prince. He had spent part of his time among his relations at Antwerp, and in other cities of Flanders; and having been partly educated in London, he spoke the English language with elegance and fluency.

This young man being selected by the duchess of Burgundy to act a conspicuous part on the public theatre, was privately brought to her court, where she carefully instructed him with respect to every circumstance relating to the person whom he was to represent. By often describing the persons of Edward IV. and his queen, of Edward V. their eldest son, the princesses their daughters, and other distinguished personages, and by relating to him a variety of anecdotes, she taught him to discourse very pertinently of the court of his pretended father, as also of his residing in the sanctuary with the queen, and of the manner in which he was drawn from thence by the contrivance of Richard III. But above all, she was careful to employ all her ingenuity in framing a probable relation of his escape from the assassins who murdered Edward V. in the Tower, and impressing it

on his memory by frequent repetitions. She also taught him to assume the air and manner of a Prince; and Perkin profited so well by her instructions, that he seemed to have lived in a court from his infancy.

When the duchess found her pupil qualified to be brought into action, she sent him under the care of an English lady to Portugal,* where he remained unknown for the space of a year. This was done with a view to the better concealment of her plan; for she apprehended that if he made his first appearance in the Netherlands, the whole would be regarded as a plot of her own contrivance. At length, in 1492, when the war between England and France appeared unavoidable, she considered it as a fit opportunity for carrying her scheme into execution, and sent orders to Perkin to repair immediately to Ireland, where she had taken measures with her correspondents for his reception. On his arrival at Cork, he assumed the title of duke of York, in which he was countenanced by the mayor. The French monarch hearing that the duke of York was in Ireland, invited him to Paris, promising him protection and assistance. Whatever opinion Charles VIII. might have

* Bacon, p. 606.

of this pretender, he gave him an honourable reception ; but when he began to negotiate a peace with England, he judged it requisite to to dismiss him, lest his residence at the court of France should prove an obstacle to the conclusion of the treaty.

On quitting Paris, Perkin retired into Flanders to the duchess of Burgundy, taking care not to discover that he had ever seen that princess before. At the first interview Margaret and her pupil acted their parts with admirable policy. She treated him very roughly, and pretended to be surprised that, in her presence, he should dare to call himself the duke of York, adding that having been once imposed on by a counterfeit earl of Warwick, she should be more upon her guard, and that it would not be easy to deceive her a second time. In fine she advised him to retire lest he should meet with the punishment due to his presumption. Perkin, not in the least disconcerted, replied, that she was certainly right in not giving too easy credit to a stranger, but still persisted in affirming that he was the duke of York, her nephew. The duchess, feigning a desire of convicting him of imposture before her whole court, asked him a number of questions, to which she had formerly taught him to make

pertinent answers. Accordingly he replied in so natural and unembarrassed a manner that the duchess seemed astonished and confounded; and pretending that she could not resist such evident proofs, she owned him for her nephew, the duke of York, and assigned him a guard for his person.* The duchess and her pupil having acted their parts in this farce with such exquisite skill, the whole court was fully persuaded that Perkin was the real duke of York, and the report, being rapidly propagated through the Netherlands, soon spread itself throughout Europe.

As soon as the news was brought into England that the duke of York was in Flanders, and acknowledged by the duchess of Burgundy, it caused an uncommon agitation in the kingdom. The story was credited by infinite numbers of people; and all those who were dissatisfied with the king or greedy of novelty, with all men of desperate fortunes, desired a change of government. The covetous temper of the king had alienated from his interests several who had shown the strongest attachment to his person and to the house of Lancaster. The lord chamberlain, Sir William Stanley, who, with his brother, had so greatly

* Rapin 1. p. 678.

contributed to Henry's victory at Bosworth, formed, with lord Fitzwalter, Sir Robert Clifford, and several others, a conspiracy to subvert his throne. Clifford and Barley, another of the conspirators, went into Flanders to concert measures with the duchess of Burgundy, who deemed it a favourable omen that the professed enemies of the house of York were the first to offer their service. In the mean while the heads of the conspiracy, in England, spared no pains in gaining adherents to the pretender.

The king was no less intent on devising means to prevent the impending storm. He caused the ports and coasts to be strictly guarded, in order to prevent any person from entering or quitting the kingdom without examination.* But above all it was necessary to undeceive the people. To prove that the duke of York was not living, it was requisite to produce the testimonies of those who had put him to death. Four persons only had been concerned in the murder. These were Sir J. Tyrrel, John Dighton, Miles Forest, and the priest who buried the two princes. As the priest and Forest were dead, there remained only Tyrrel and Dighton. These

* Bacon p. 607.

two were apprehended by the king's order, and, after a private examination, their depositions were published, and made to agree in every particular relating to the murder of the two sons of Edward IV. Tyrrel was executed, but Dighton was released, probably for the purpose of being ready to corroborate his own testimony. These proceedings, however, failed of producing the effect which the king had expected; for a confession taken at a private examination, and published by him, whose interest it was to make it appear to his advantage, was far from being regarded as a proof of the fact which he wished the world to believe. Henry finding this method insufficient to sway the public opinion, ransacked all the resources of his policy to discover who this impostor was that personated the duke of York. For this purpose he employed several persons who repaired to the pretended duke under colour of offering him their service. These spies had instructions to trace the origin of the impostor from his birth to the time that he came to the duchess of Burgundy, to discover his correspondents in England, and to endeavour, by every possible means to gain Sir Robert Clifford, who was supposed to know all the secret. In order to procure greater credit to these spies in Flan-

ders, Henry caused the sentence of excommunication to be pronounced against them by name as rebels and traitors every Sunday at St. Paul's. From these spies he had, or pretended to have, perfect information relative to the birth of the impostor and to every circumstance of his life. This information was immediately divulged throughout the kingdom, but as the particulars were published by the king, the principal party concerned, his account obtained little credit.

Henry, however, having, by means of his emissaries, gained Sir Robert Clifford, procured exact information of the plot that was formed in England, and of the persons concerned. Resolving to crush the mischief in embryo, he caused to be arrested in one day, and almost at the same instant, Lord Fitzwalter, Sir Simon Montfort, Sir Robert Kataliffe, and Sir William D'Aubeney, who were all convicted of high treason, and executed on the scaffold. Henry also took care for the preservation of Ireland;* and, in order to gain the affections of the Irish, he granted a pardon to the earls of Desmond and Kildare, with all the other adherents of the pretended duke of York. But if Ireland experienced the lenity of the king, England felt the weight of his oppressive hand; and, by numerous forfeitures,

* Sir J. Ware, c. 10.

he brought large sums of money into his treasury. Sir Robert Clifford, returning from Flanders, impeached the lord chamberlain, Sir William Stanley, of high treason, in holding a correspondence with the pretended duke of York and the duchess of Burgundy. Stanley being tried and condemned, every one supposed that Henry would pardon a nobleman, who had so greatly contributed to place him on the throne. But his immense riches, which promised a plentiful confiscation, extinguished in the mind of the king every sentiment of mercy and gratitude; and the person to whom he was in a great measure indebted for his crown, suffered death on the scaffold.*

Feb. 16th,
A. D. 1495.

The duchess of Burgundy could not think to relinquish her hopes of deriving some advantage from the theatrical king, whom she had taken so great pains to create. She therefore resolved to send Perkin into England to sound the affections of the people, without depending any longer on the aid of the great men, who, finding themselves narrowly watched by the king, were become extremely cautious. He accordingly made his appearance on the coast of Kent; but his reception was sufficient to extinguish his hopes of suc-

* Bacon, p. 610.

cess in that quarter. The people rising in arms, invited him, by signals, to land; but Perkin, suspecting some artifice, sent only a few men on shore, who being attacked, were all killed except about a hundred and fifty, who being taken prisoners, were hanged by the king's order. His next attempt was in Ireland; but the state of affairs in that country was changed. Perkin, therefore, not finding the people inclined to countenance his design, set sail for Scotland, where it appears that he was assured of a favourable reception.

On his arrival at Edinburgh, he announced himself as the duke of York, and demanded an audience of the king. Jame IV. affecting an extreme surprise, gave him a formal reception in the presence of the whole court. The adventurer made a long and impressive speech, recounting the particulars of his pretended escape from the cruelty of Richard III. and imploring the aid of the Scottish monarch in expelling the English usurper, adding, that he should never omit any opportunity of demonstrating his gratitude.

James appeared to be moved with Perkin's recital of his adventures and misfortunes, and told him that whoever he was, he should not repent of putting himself into his hands. Shortly after, he publicly acknowledged him as duke of York, and gave him in marriage

Catharine Gordon, daughter of the earl of Huntley, one of the most beautiful and most accomplished ladies in Scotland. But James did not limit his generosity to these favours: he also undertook to place him on the throne of England. The Scottish king, in company with the Flemish adventurer, having entered England with an army, the pretended duke of York issued a proclamation, in which Henry was stigmatized with the opprobrious names of usurper, tyrant, and murderer; and liberal rewards were promised to all who should assist the lawful heir in expelling him from the throne. This proclamation, however, proved ineffectual, as none of the English joined the standard of the pretender. The king of Scotland, therefore, unwilling to retire without reaping some fruits from his expedition, ravaged Northumberland, and obtained a considerable booty. On this occasion, Perkin made use of an excellent artifice to make himself appear to be the real son of Edward IV. he affected an extreme concern for the calamities of the English, and conjured the Scottish monarch to spare his miserable subjects. The approach of an English army obliged James to retire into his own kingdom, as he was unwilling to expose his plunder to the hazard of a battle. This invasion, at a time when a truce sub-

sisted between the two kingdoms, afforded Henry an excellent pretext for demanding money of the parliament, in order to prosecute the war against Scotland, and a subsidy was accordingly granted. But the king being desirous of peace, entered into a negotiation with James, at the same time that he caused the subsidy for carrying on the war to be levied with the greatest rigour. The commissioners appointed for that purpose proceeded to the different counties; but in Cornwall they met with an unexpected opposition. The people, headed by Thomas Flammock, a lawyer, and Michael Joseph, a farrier, took arms, in order to carry a petition to the king, praying him to desist from the tax, and to dismiss his evil counsellors. At Wells they were joined by lord Audley, a restless and discontented nobleman, whom they joyfully received as their general. Audley led them through the southern counties into Kent, and at last they encamped on Blackheath.

A. D. 1497. The king seeing the insurgents so near London, resolved to march against them without delay; and as he was greatly superior both in number of troops and military skill, he took such dispositions as left little to hazard or fortune. Having divided his army into three bodies, he ordered lord Oxford, who commanded the first, to

take a circuitous route behind the hills, and to fall on their rear, while the second, commanded by lord D'Aubeney, was to charge them in front. The king himself with the third division, or body of reserve, remained in St. George's Fields to support the second division, or to secure the metropolis. From the unskilfulness of the rebels, the plan which Henry had formed succeeded according to his wish. Being attacked both in front and rear, they were easily defeated. Their army consisted of sixteen thousand men,* of whom two thousand were slain, and the rest surrendered at discretion. Lord Audley was beheaded, Flammock and Joseph were hanged and quartered: the rest of the prisoners were given to the captors, who had liberty to compound with them as they pleased for their ransom.

While Henry was menaced by this insurrection, the Scottish king seized the opportunity of making another incursion into England; but this second expedition was not more successful than the first. The earl of Surrey, who was then in Yorkshire with an army, not only obliged him to retire, but followed him into Scotland. Before the expiration of the year, a treaty of peace was concluded between Henry and James,

A. D. 1497.

* Bacon, p. 619. Rapin says only 6000.—1. p. 680.

in consequence of which the latter dismissed the pretended duke of York; but he conveyed him and his wife into Ireland.

The Cornish rebels having compounded with their captors, and returned to their respective homes, soon began to re-assemble; and hearing that Perkin Warbeck was in Ireland, invited him to come among them, assuring him that he would meet with a powerful support. The pretender being without any refuge in Ireland, and expecting no further assistance from Scotland, France, or the Netherlands, gladly accepted the invita-

tion. He landed at Whitsand bay, with a hundred and twenty, or a hundred and forty men.* He then proceeded to Bodmin, where he mustered about three thousand, and published a manifesto filled with invectives against Henry, and magnificent promises to such as should assist in dethroning the usurper. After publishing this proclamation, his next object was to make himself master of Exeter. Finding that the inhabitants were not to be intimidated by threats, nor allured by promises, he resolved to storm the city. As he was destitute of artillery, he could adopt no other mode of assault than scaling the walls; but

* Stowe, p. 480. Bacon, p. 622. Rapin says only 70. Vol. 1, p. 681.

in this he was unsuccessful, and lost two hundred men in the attempt.

Henry hearing that Perkin was before Exeter, immediately dispatched lord D'Aubenev to the relief of that place, causing at the same time a report to be spread, that he himself was about to follow with a numerous army. Perkin, on receiving intelligence of the preparations making against him, raised the siege of Exeter, and soon after losing all hope of success or of safety, took refuge in a monastery.* His troops, who were about six thousand in number, seeing themselves abandoned by their chief, submitted to the king's mercy. The wife of Perkin was then brought away from her retreat at St. Michael's Mount, lest if she was pregnant and should escape, her offspring might prove the source of fresh troubles. This virtuous lady demonstrated an unbounded affection for her husband; and her modesty and engaging address made such an impression on the king, that he gave her a gracious reception, and assigned her an honourable allowance, which she enjoyed during his reign, and many years after his death.

The king being come to Exeter, conferred many marks of distinction on the mayor and citizens. He then proceeded to punish the

* Bacon, *ibid*,

rebels: some of the ringleaders were hanged; to the rest, who had submitted to his mercy, he granted their lives, but imposed on them such heavy fines as if he had intended to leave them to starve after freeing them from the gallows. After many consultations with his council, in regard to the pretended duke of York, it was determined to engage him by an offer of pardon to make a full confession of his imposture. Perkin, seeing himself without hope after so many trials and so narrowly watched as to preclude a possibility of escape, gladly accepted the offer. The king then ordered him to be conducted to court, but although he seemed to be entirely at liberty he was attended by persons appointed to prevent his escape. In his journey to London he was exposed to the insults and derision of the people, which he bore with great magnanimity, and never acted the prince better than on this trying occasion.

On his arrival he was conducted, on horseback, twice through the metropolis. He was afterwards privately examined, and his confession was published, giving an account of all his actions, and the places where he had lived ever since his infancy. But the world was surprised to find no particulars of the conspiracy, nor any mention of its authors, not even of the duchess of Burgundy. This

mysterious silence confirmed many in the opinion that Perkin Warbeck was the real duke of York. It was strongly suspected that the king had dictated this pretended confession, and that he had studiously avoided the mention of any circumstances relating to foreign princes, lest he should be publicly contradicted by persons who would not have for him the same regard as his own subjects.

The restless adventurer was not long before he attempted to make his escape. He first took the road for Kent, hoping to find some vessel to carry him out of the kingdom ; but discovering that orders were every where sent to apprehend him, he took sanctuary in a monastery at Shene, now Richmond, in Surrey. Having again surrendered on condition that his life should be spared, he was sent to the Tower. After remaining some time in his prison, he gained four servants of Sir J. Digby, lieutenant of the Tower, and formed the design of killing their master, seizing the keys, and making his escape, together with the young earl of Warwick, who for the sake of regaining that liberty of which he had been so long and so unjustly deprived, readily engaged in the plot. Various circumstances, however, excited a suspicion that this conspiracy originated from Henry himself, who had artfully contrived to draw

them into a snare. All the reasons alleged for fixing this imputation on the king amount to no more than vague conjecture; but it is certain that the affair furnished him with a plausible pretext for freeing himself from all uneasiness on the subject of the pretended duke of York and the earl of Warwick. Both

A. D. 1499. of them were condemned and executed. The earl of Warwick was twenty-four years of age, during fifteen of which he had been kept a close prisoner. This unfortunate prince who had been so long debarred from all communication with the world, that he is said to have not known the difference between a goose and a hen, was the last male of the house of York, which was indeed his chief crime: he was beheaded on Tower Hill. Perkin Warbeck terminated on the gallows a life of romantic adventure:* he had been acknowledged as lawful king in Ireland, Flanders, France, and Scotland, and even in some parts of England; nor has all the artifices of Henry fully convinced posterity that this extraordinary person was not the real duke of York.

To examine the pretensions of Perkin Warbeck in every point of view, and under

* The chief authorities for the history of Perkin Warbeck, as here related, are Bacon, p. 604 to p. 627; Hall fol. 31 to fol. 50; Hollingshed p. 783, &c.

the various shades of probability, which present themselves on each side of the question, would require a long dissertation. It suffices here to remark, that while the house of Lancaster, or rather of Tudor, sat on the throne, no writer thought fit to affront the reigning family, by vindicating the claims of a person who was laid in the grave and had left no representative. All the historians of those times have re-echoed the same story. But the writers of the present age, in which the same interests no longer exist, have indulged themselves in the liberty of free investigation.† In glancing at the probabilities on the opposite sides of the question, the reader will observe that every thing published by the king, the party the most interested, was taken from private examinations, and falls, in many respects, extremely short of that kind of evidence which forces conviction on the mind of an impartial inquirer. On the other hand his escape from the murderers of Edward V. is not very probable, if we consider the difficulty of the attempt. Or had this escape been really effected, why was the duke of York so long concealed when in the duchess of Burgundy's court, and the rumour of his

† A recent author, of considerable abilities, appears to be decidedly of opinion that Perkin Warbeck was the real duke of York. Vide Jones Hist. of Brecknock, vol. 1. ch. 7th.

being alive propagated in so dark and clandestine a manner? The whole affair is extremely mysterious; and whether this adventurer was or was not the person whose name and title he assumed, is one of those historical problems which can never obtain a solution.

Henry, being wholly freed from his domestic troubles and apprehensions, employed the remainder of his reign in negotiating alliances with foreign powers, in filling his coffers, and in depressing the aristocracy. While he thus enjoyed external and internal tranquillity, the Pope, Alexander VI. communicated to him a project which he had formed for undertaking a croisade against the Turks. The plan proposed was grand and extensive. The Bohemians, Poles, and Hungarians, were to attack the Turks in Thrace, the French and Spaniards in Greece, and the Pope himself, with the king of England, the Venetians, and the other states and princes of Italy were to combine their maritime force and attack Constantinople. The sovereign pontiff, although not ignorant that the ardour of the princes of Europe for these romantic wars had long ago subsided, expressed an extraordinary desire of exciting all christendom to this pious enterprise. But the character of Alexander VI. which was

well known, authorised a strong presumption that, on this occasion, he did not act solely from motives of religion and zeal for the glory of God. On the contrary it was easy to perceive that the great design of the croisade was to fill the papal treasury with the contributions of both sovereigns and subjects. The genius of Henry was far from being favourable to romantic and hazardous undertakings; but foreseeing that, in the existing state of Europe, this project would meet with such obstacles as would never permit it to be carried into execution, he considered the proposal as affording him an opportunity of shewing his zeal for religion, and accordingly answered the Pope's nuncio that no prince, in christendom, would be more desirous than himself of promoting this affair for the glory of God and the good of the church; but at the same time he clogged his offers of service with so many conditions that it was easy to discover his intention. The Pope readily perceived the drift of his answer, and finding that expeditions of this kind were no longer in unison with the politics of Europe and the spirit of the times, abandoned his project.

Among the treaties with foreign powers, by which Henry endeavoured to establish his throne and secure it to his posterity, are those which stipulated the marriage of prince

Arthur, his eldest son, with Catherine of Arragon, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, and that of Margaret, his eldest daughter, with James IV. king of Scotland. Arthur dying within less than two years, Henry was obliged, by treaty, to restore a hundred thousand crowns already received as half of her portion, and if she remained in England to give her one third of the principality of Wales, as also of the duchy of Cornwall, and earldom of Chester.* Henry could not infringe these engagements without coming to a rupture with Ferdinand, and such a measure was inconsistent with his interests, as the deference shewn him by the other princes of Europe, and especially by the king of France, was, in a great measure, owing to his strict alliance with the Spanish monarch. He therefore devised an expedient for preserving the friendship of Ferdinand without refunding the money, and even to procure the other half of Catherine's portion that remained unpaid. This was to marry that princess to his son Henry, now the presumptive heir to the crown. The king of Spain agreed to the proposal: The Pope granted a dispensation; and the prince of Wales was married to his brother's widow, a transaction which gave rise to events of great importance in the

* Rym. fœd. tom. 13. p. 84.

following reign. The marriage of Margaret, with the Scottish monarch, was ultimately productive of effects highly beneficial to posterity, as it proved the means of uniting the two crowns of England and Scotland.*

Henry was now in the zenith of his prosperity. Every thing had succeeded according to his desire. His whole study was now to accumulate wealth; and the affair of Perkin Warbeck was a plentiful fountain that was not yet exhausted. Commissioners were appointed to make a strict inquiry after all who had abetted or refused to oppose the late rebellions. All those who were found guilty were punished by heavy fines, which were rigorously exacted. Two of his principal instruments in this affair, were Sir Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley, the former a man of family, the latter a sieve-maker's son.† These two ministers appear to have executed their commission, not only with extreme rigour, but with the most oppressive injustice, by which they drew on themselves the popular odium, and cast a gloomy shade over the closing reign of their sovereign.

* One of Henry's counsellors having represented to him that this marriage might eventually give to England a Scotch sovereign, the king replied, that should this be the case, the weakest would follow the strongest: that Scotland would be annexed to England, not England to Scotland. Rapin l. p. 685. This remark has been verified.

† Bacon, p. 629.

While his agents were using every method of extorting money from the people, the king, after frequent attacks of the gout, was seized with a disorder of the lungs, which announced his approaching dissolution. He prepared for death by acts of generosity of which he would never have thought while any prospect of life remained: he granted a general pardon, and liberated, at his own expence, all prisoners that were confined for debts under 40s. in the metropolis and its vicinity. After these preparations for his entrance into
April 22d,
A. D. 1509. eternity, Henry died at Richmond, in the fifty-third year of his age, and the twenty-fourth of his reign.

The character of Henry VII. like that of most other princes and statesmen, has been variously estimated; and his vices as well as his virtues appear to have been exaggerated. Historians condemn his insatiable avarice, while they extol his prudence. During the whole period of his reign, he is said to have had only two objects in view: the first was to preserve a crown acquired by an extraordinary stroke of good fortune, the second to accumulate money. The successive revolutions which had taken place since the death of Edward III. rendered him sensible that the throne of England was a precarious tenure; and he observed that the want of money was one great cause

of the troubles and misfortunes of his predecessors. These considerations seem to have actuated all his measures. It has been observed, that although he saved the lives of many whose crimes were deserving of death, he never was known to exercise an act of grace in regard to fines and confiscations. On this subject he was always inflexible. Among his numerous plans for depressing the aristocracy, he had procured several acts of parliament, which forbade, under severe penalties, the giving of liveries to any but menial servants, and this law he enforced with the greatest rigour. On a visit to the earl of Oxford, who had rendered him both in war and peace the most eminent services, he was entertained in the most splendid manner. When Henry was about to depart, he saw a great number of men dressed in very rich liveries, and ranged so as to form a lane through which he was to pass. If the earl had forgotten the law, it was remembered by the king: "What! my 'lord of Oxford,'" said he, "are these fine 'gentlemen all your menial servants.'" The earl replied that he did not keep so many domestics; but that they were his retainers, who came to do him honour on extraordinary occasions. "My lord," said the king, "I thank 'you for your good cheer; but I must not 'suffer my laws to be broken: my attorney-

"general must talk with you." Lord Verulam, the historian of Henry's reign, informs us that the earl of Oxford was obliged to atone for this trespass by paying a fine of fifteen hundred marks.

This monarch has, indeed, been taxed with extreme severity ; but although a great part of his reign was disturbed by plots, treasons, and insurrections, it was marked with few executions. Fines and confiscations were more congenial to Henry's disposition than capital punishments. And it must be observed that in his reign scarcely any person suffered for treason, that would not in the present age have met with the same treatment. If, therefore, he was somewhat too greedy of the money, he was sparing of the blood of his subjects. He was both from inclination and policy a lover of peace, and usually expressed his idea of its value, by saying that "when Christ came into the world peace was sung, and when he went out of the world, peace was bequeathed." In regard to his military talents, they were never put to a fair trial. His victory at Bosworth was owing to the desertion of Richard's troops, rather than to his own martial abilities ; and in the battles of Stoke and Blackheath, he had a great superiority of numbers, besides the advantage of having troops better armed and disciplined than those of the rebels. It does not

appear that he was deficient either in courage or skill; for when his crown and his life were at stake, he faced the danger with a dauntless composure, although not without taking every possible precaution.

His religious and moral character appears extremely ambiguous. He politically professed an implicit submission to the Pope, and the greatest veneration for the clergy; but he never suffered them to direct his conduct. He was constant in the exercises of religion; but in the sham excommunication of his own spies, as well as in some other instances, he made no scruple of prostituting the ordinances of the church to the views of his policy. He was a strict observer of justice, where his own interest was not concerned; but his avarice often made him unjust. The fear of losing his crown, induced him to consider as lawful every means that could tend to its preservation; and the death of the innocent earl of Warwick will ever be a stain on his memory. As a skilful legislator and a refined politician, his name stands conspicuous in history, and his prudence has procured him the title of the English Solomon. His constant aim was to depress the nobility, and to exalt and humanize the people. To the restless ambition of the former, and the servile dependence of the latter, all the

troubles of the preceding reigns might be traced ; and Henry had not failed to make the observation. Every baron had a number of subjects, over whom he exercised an absolute power, and upon every occasion could influence numbers to join him in a revolt against the sovereign. Henry considered, that to give these petty monarchs the power of selling their estates, would be a sure means of weakening their interests. It has already been observed, that the croisades and the increase of luxury, had long ago introduced the alienation of landed property, till in the reign of Edward I. the law of entails was devised, in order to put a stop to the practice. Henry procured an act of parliament, which granted to the nobility a power of alienating their possessions. This law was extremely pleasing to the commons, and not disagreeable to the nobles, as it afforded them an immediate resource for supplying the demands of prodigality. The blow reached their posterity alone, and their views were not so extensive as to foresee remote consequences.

But the greatest efforts of this monarch were directed to the advancement of commerce, because this naturally tended to introduce a spirit of liberty among the people, and disengaged them from their dependence on the nobility. His avarice and extreme

caution, however, in refusing to incur the trifling expense of equipping Columbus for the search of a new world, caused him to lose the most glorious opportunity of immortalizing his name, and extending the navigation and trade of his kingdom that any monarch could ever enjoy. He endeavoured to atone for his error by sending out Sebastian Cabot on a similar expedition ; but it was then too late, and the favourable opportunity was forever lost.* But narrow views of commercial affairs were not peculiar to Henry : they were common to all the princes and states of that age. The vast projects and magnificent views of Columbus were treated with contempt, or at least with neglect, in other countries as well as in England ; and it was only after eight years of solicitations, seconded by the exertion of public spirited individuals, that he obtained the patronage of queen Isabella in Spain.*

The reign of Henry VII. was, on the whole,

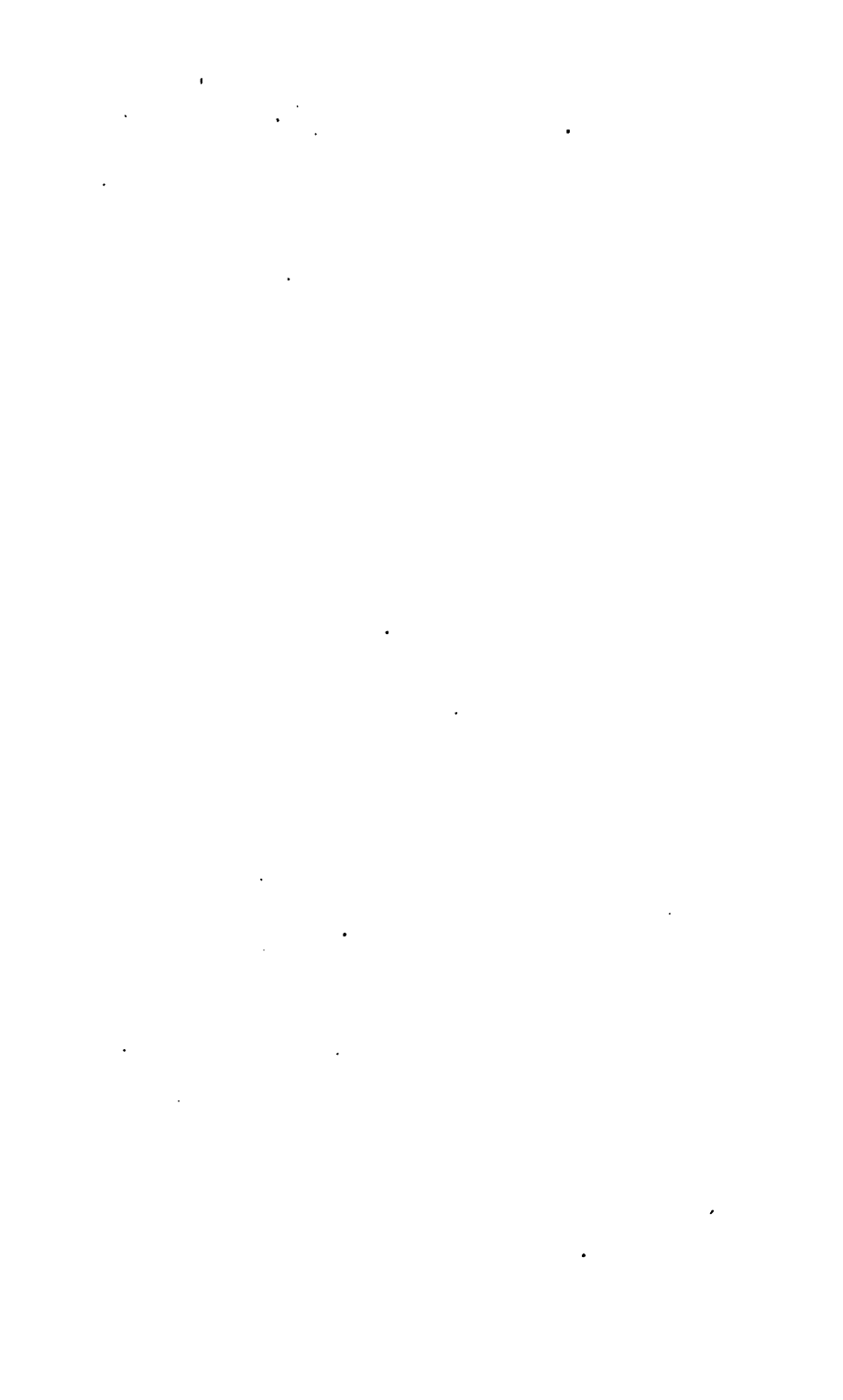
* The question might here be proposed : What would have been the consequences had the English, instead of the Spaniards, discovered and conquered Mexico, Peru ? &c. It may be objected that the possession of the American mines has been followed by the decline of industry and the decrease of population in Spain, and that the same effects might have been produced in England. But the subsequent circumstances of these two kingdoms have been extremely different, and the question, considered in all its bearings, might furnish matter for a curious and interesting dissertation. Here it suffices to observe that when America was conquered, Spain was sinking into despotism : England was rising to liberty. For a view of the causes which prevented Spain from deriving such advantages as might have been expected, vide Hist. of Spain, published by Longman and Co. London, 1810.

extremely beneficial to England, and produced one of the most important revolutions that ever took place in any country. An insolent and factious aristocracy was humbled: a nation, addicted to tumult and convulsed with incessant rebellions, was reduced to civil subordination. These effects, however, were not to be ascribed solely to the prudence and patriotism of the king; but in part to the circumstances of the times. The sovereigns of Europe had long made the depression of the nobles and the exaltation of the people one of the great objects of their policy; but their endeavours had often been attended with little success. It was only towards the close of the fifteenth century that human reason, after a lethargy of ten centuries, began to exert itself with success for the happiness of the species. In the reign of Henry VII. the statutes, which permitted the alienation of estates, prohibited the giving of liveries to retainers, &c. gave a mortal blow to the feudal system in England; but the way for this revolution was previously prepared by the contest between the houses of York and Lancaster, in which, as already observed, many of the principal families had been extirpated by battles and executions, and the

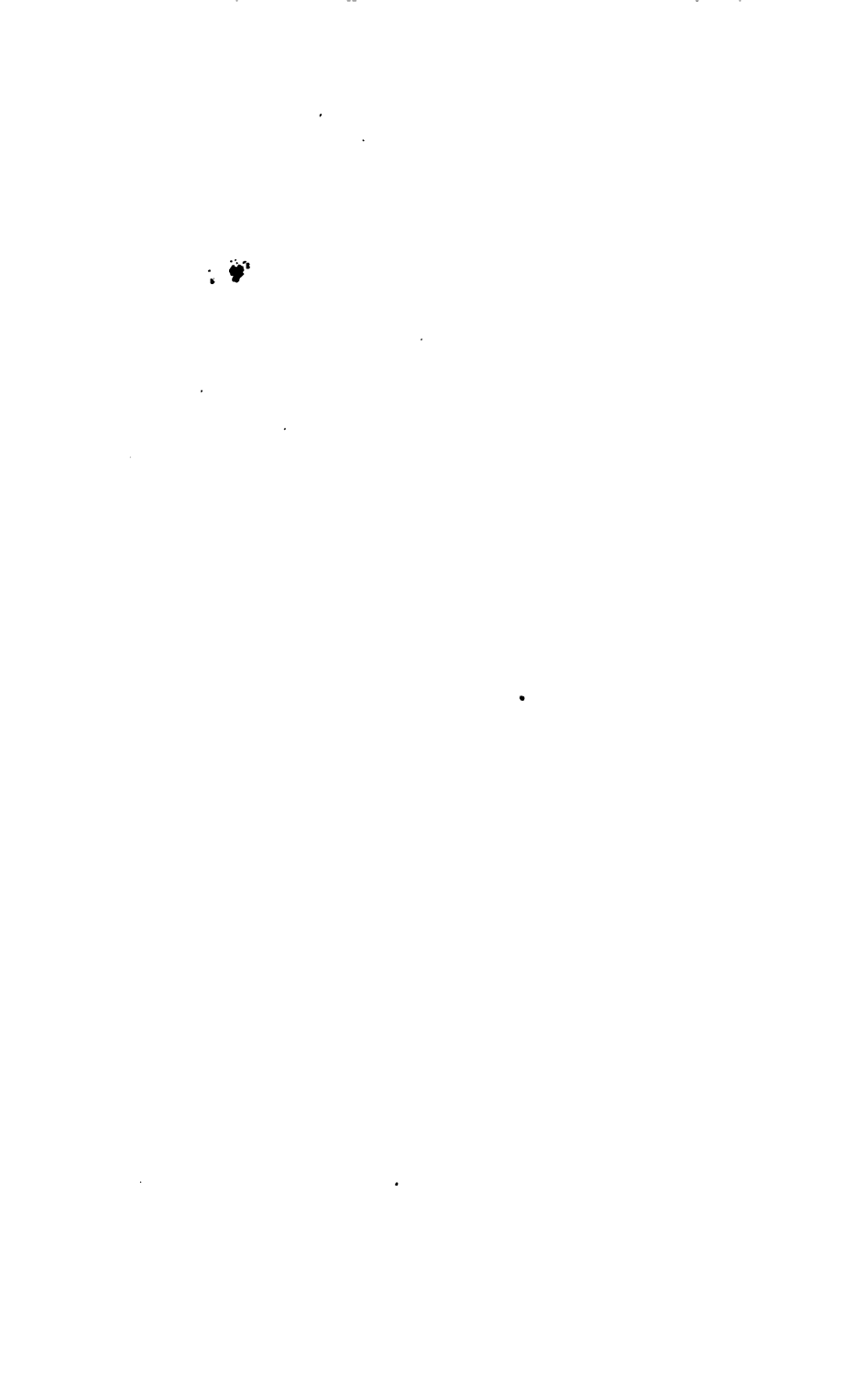
* The republic of Genoa refused to patronize the enterprise of Columbus; and in Portugal he was undermined by an interested party. Vide Robertson's Hist. Amer. vol. 1. and authorities quoted.

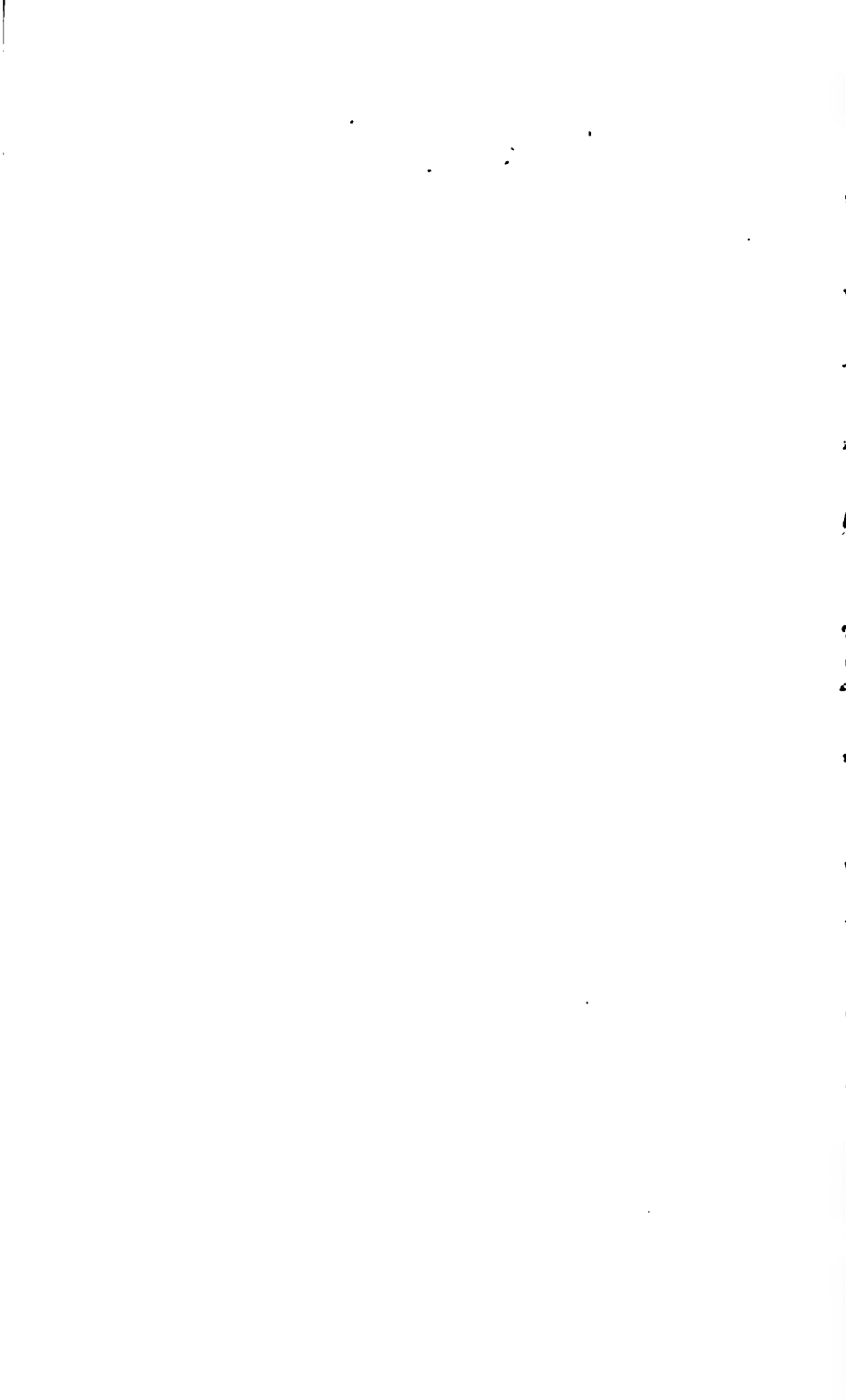
rest deprived of their wealth and influence by fines and confiscations. The civil wars, therefore, had contributed more effectually than all the policy of Henry to the depression of the aristocratical order. The subsequent extension of commerce excited the industry and increased the wealth and consequently the influence of the people: while an increasing luxury multiplied the wants and exhausted the wealth of the great: the baronial estates were gradually dismembered, and a considerable part of them dispersed among the commons, and the baronial power was, in process of time, wholly extinguished. Various circumstances, therefore, concurred to produce one great effect. It must be allowed that whatever the character of Henry might be as a man, he was one of the best of the English kings; his reign if not the most brilliant was the most beneficial that England had seen; and it must be regarded as the era in which was laid the foundation of our present system of society.

END OF VOL. I.



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